

# The Ecclesia :

That is,

## The Assembly of God.

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By W. S., Senr.

The truths set forth in this booklet are of such great importance that I feel constrained to invite my readers to introduce it to all Christian friends.

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# THE ECCLESIA:

THAT IS,

## THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

W. S. GELDER, EVANGELIST

—  
A PERFECT UNITY,

—  
YET MANIFESTED BY NUMEROUS

LOCAL ASSEMBLIES OF GOD;

THESE ARE SEPARATED FROM EACH OTHER

BY DISTANCE ONLY.

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By W. S., Senr.  
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LITTLEHAMPTON:

W. HIGNETT, PRINTER AND PUBLISHER.

~~PRICE~~

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PART I.

THE ORIGIN  
OF  
"THE ECCLESIA":  
THAT IS,  
THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

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*I have truth to impart—  
Very precious truth—  
Truth for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.*

IT is recorded in the Gospel by St. Matthew, that when Jesus came into the district of Cæsarea Phillipi, He enquired of His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" And they replied, "Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, others say Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Thus it became evident that the long-promised Messiah was unrecognised. Notwithstanding all the evidence which He had given to the Jews, by His mighty works, and His gracious words, He was yet unknown. "He came to His own [people] and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1. 11, 12).

To a little company of those who had received Him, He was now about to disclose a great and precious secret. Conscious of being rejected by the nation, He had led out this little band of His disciples

beyond—the gates of the royal city, and outside the special sphere of His testimony. Soon after He had revealed to these chosen ones what was about to come to pass, He charged them that they should tell no man that He was the Christ (Matt. 16. 20). The truth that Jesus was the Christ had been abundantly witnessed to the Jews, but they would not hear, now therefore they were to hear it no more. But though the chosen *earthly* people would not recognise their King, and were about to crucify Him, yet God was about to create a *heavenly* people, who should love and worship Him. The royal city, the city of David, was doomed, and the temple of which the Jews so boasted, was to be destroyed—not one stone to be left upon another—yet with what pity the rejected King wept over it and said, “If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luke 19, 42, R.V.) Again that precious voice is heard, saying “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, *till ye shall say*, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord [Jehovah].” (Matt. 23. 37, R.V.)

But to return to the scene near Cæsarea Philippi. Jesus now said to His disciples, “But whom say *ye* that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said unto him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to

thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [*a stone*], and upon this Rock [*the Christ*] I will build my ecclesia [*assembly*], and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16. 13-18). This the Lord was declaring as a future purpose of His.

On the day of Pentecost, however, this building was commenced, when the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven. The Holy Spirit was now given because Jesus was now glorified (see John 7. 37).

In the opening chapter of the Acts we learn that the number of the disciples before Pentecost was about 120, and after the descent of the Holy Spirit, Peter and the rest of the apostles being now divinely furnished with power and authority, proclaimed "Jesus and the resurrection" with such great effect that about 3,000 souls were added.\* Further on we read, "The Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved."

In Acts 5 we are furnished with a very important record—we read, "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were with one accord in Solomon's porch. But of the rest [of the people] durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified them; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5. 12-14).

Thus we behold the Lord building His ecclesia [*assembly*]. None but the Lord by the Holy Spirit can add to the assembly of God.

Now I would gladly enlarge upon what further took place at the commencement, but am only outlining the

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\* In 1 Cor. 15. 6 we learn that after the resurrection our Lord was seen of above 500 brethren at once; but this needs no comment here.

building of the ecclesia—the great assembly of God—the one Body! My chief object, however, is to lead up to the consideration of the local assemblies of God; that being my great point in writing this paper. The assembly of God—the ecclesia (I cannot adopt the word church, for that does not convey the exact meaning of the Greek ecclesia.\* The true rendering is “the assembly,” and in its use with reference to the Lord’s disciples—“the assembly of God.”)

But this one assembly, as to what it really is Godward, is a perfect unit. Yet in its conditions earthward it is parceled out into innumerable sections. These are local assemblies, counterparts one of another, yet ever in true unity. One Body—constituted one by the one Spirit. This marvellous aggregation of those who are saved through faith in the Son of God are in the following scriptures seen as One Body: the head of which is The Christ. See 1 Cor. 10. 12-14, also Ephes. 4., Col. 1. 18, etc. It is very important that all believers make themselves well acquainted with these portions of the Word of God.

We see then that every true believer in our Lord Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, every regenerate person—man, woman or child—is of the ecclesia of God, and is built upon the Rock, which is Christ. All such are Christed-ones, Christians. Now comes the very serious question, What company of Christians is he or she to associate

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\* The designation “church” is not a true translation of the Greek *ecclesia*, but is derived from quite a different word, namely, *kyriakon*, the meaning of which is “belonging to the Lord.” Of course the assembly belongs to the Lord—but that is true of many things, indeed “He is Lord of all”—but in using the word *ecclesia* the Spirit of inspiration fixed our attention upon a company of called-out ones, be they few or many, who are separated to God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and baptised into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

with? The answer is plain and simple. Our gracious God has assigned to each one a place, and also loving companionship, in His assembly. The newly-saved one, and others who have long been saved, should carefully and prayerfully avoid self-pleasing in this matter. The steadfast purpose of all who are born again—born from above—should ever be to please the Lord who bought them; as it is written, “He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but to Him who for their sakes died and rose again” (2 Cor. 5. 15, R.V.)

The local assembly of God is where those only who love our Lord Jesus Christ assemble together for worship; where together also they manifest their remembrance of our blessed Lord in the way which He appointed.

There are a great many such assemblies in the world, indeed there should be one in every locality. Let the dear seekers seek to the God of all grace in earnest prayer for guidance. Remember our Lord’s word, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find,” etc. (Luke 11. 9).

If a local assembly of God does not exist in the neighbourhood, let two or three earnest souls get together for prayer. Let them earnestly and *persistently* pray to our Father in the name of Jesus, *until an assembly be formed*. Let us remember our Lord’s parable in Luke 18. 1.

The many assemblies which, thanks be to our God, are already in existence, are known generally as “believers’ meetings” or “meetings of believers.” This is a very simple designation truly, but it does not sufficiently define that which is indicated in the Scriptures as the ecclesia—the local assembly of God.



When our Lord Jesus Christ addressed the selected seven assemblies of Asia (see Revelation 2 and 3) He instructed His servant John to write—

To the messenger of the “ecclesia”	} Ephesus.	
(assembly of God) in		
” ” ”		Smyrna.
” ” ”		Pergamos.
” ” ”		Thyatira.
” ” ”		Sardis.
” ” ”		Philadelphia.
” ” ”	Laodicea.	

These assemblies were addressed severally, yet each message was accompanied with these words, “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies of God.”

Each assembly was designated by *its locality*. So with the Pauline epistles. And thus it must be now. Yet these assemblies, necessarily separated by distance, were all participators in the whole of the Spirit’s utterances. So, thanks be to our God, it is now.

*Distance is the only just cause of separation* between the assemblies of God. No other occasion of separation can find sanction in the Word of God.

The Lord grant grace that none may be grieved by this utterance, for it is from one who accounts himself to be less than the least of all saints. Moreover the declaration is made before many dear and gifted Christians who have thought otherwise.

And now, having divine guidance as to SEPARATION, let us have equal regard to what the Scriptures teach with referance to UNION and UNITY. As a matter of human policy it may be truly said “*union is strength.*” And, acting upon this, many of the dear saints of God have formed unions for themselves; moreover the ten-

dency is still in that direction. Now union is a combination made by mutual agreement, and if this be effected by any of the assemblies of God, it must be accomplished by their own wisdom and device. The Word of God will not help them. The effect of such unions must be sooner or later to manifest the impotence and mistaken zeal of those who bring them about. Failure comes of necessity, because God has created and declared UNITY, not "union." In this UNITY there is no voluntary action on our part. It is not a thing to be accomplished, it exists—perfect oneness. UNITY is a condition of accord with unit. It stands alone. There is "one Body"—a unit.

In our case UNION is not strength, but manifest weakness. UNITY is strength, for it is of God.

Has not our gracious Lord allowed us to find our way to this conclusion, through sorrowful mistakes and self-inflicted sorrows?

May we not say *conformity*—that is, obedience—is the only way to manifest UNITY?

The following is the spirit of it: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to *keep* the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. *One* body, *one* Spirit, even as also ye were called in *one* hope of your calling. *One* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all. Seven times one—seven. Perfect unity!

## “THE ECCLESIA”:

THAT IS,

THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

**M**ORE than half-a-century ago there was a very special awakening among the people of God. The Lord Jesus Christ had through the Holy Spirit raised up many witnesses, to whom He had given gifts as Evangelists. By these the Gospel of the grace of God had been proclaimed with such power that thousands were being added to the Lord. At this time also it pleased Him to stir up many of His saved ones to seek fresh guidance from on high, that they might know His will, and walk in His ways.

During this period there was a group of godly men connected with Dublin College. Among them was Mr. A. N. Groves of Exeter, whose heart was set upon Missionary work in India. He had come to Dublin College to take a degree, which would enable him to obtain an appointment from the Church Missionary Society. The little band of disciples of whom I am speaking took counsel together, and resolved to study the Word of God collectively, especially the New Testament scriptures: desiring, if possible, to be freed from the entanglements of the various schools of theology. So they agreed to lay aside, while pursuing their united study, all commentaries and all traditional teaching. They said among themselves, “Our Lord Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, saying He shall lead you into *all truth*, also assuring His

disciples that He should abide with us for ever. On the day of Pentecost, He did send that Holy Spirit of promise: and the immediate result was the opening up of the Scriptures in a most marvellous way. This effected the ingathering at once of about three thousand souls." Now our earnest enquirers after truth arranged to meet periodically: and at these meetings they shut themselves up to the Lord. They prayed earnestly that they might be "all taught of God."

It is needless to say that their asking, their seeking and their knocking brought most gracious results. They came forth like bees laden with honey. Truth after truth, which had long been kept in obscurity by the traditions of men, now shone in their divine brightness. They became fully confirmed in their conviction of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer; and that He is ever ready to fulfill all that our blessed Lord assured us of, concerning His most gracious offices. It was given to them to perceive that the Lord's promised coming for His saints of this present dispensation to be with Him where He is, will *first* be fulfilled. That is an event quite distinct from, and preceeding, His coming again to the earth, when He will judge the world in righteousness, and restore His people Israel. Then He will sit upon "the throne of His glory," and will reign over the world, with His saints, a thousand years. The diligent enquirers saw that the final Judgement of the Great White Throne, in Rev. 20, at the close of the Millennium, is quite distinct from the many other judgements which must come before that. They now understood that the dispensation of the Spirit of grace is quite different from the past dispensation under the law; this was made plain

to them. The separation of believers as to their walk and service, became also evident; with many other truths, which were more fully opened out later on.

At one of the meetings of these dear men of God it was suggested that, as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, they should meet together on the first day of the week to break bread. Had not the Lord said, "This do in remembrance of Me"? They obeyed this command, and they realised still increase of blessing. Their meetings on the first day of the week led to a great revival of the observance of the Lord's Supper. Mr. Groves returned to Exeter with the joyful news, and many believers' meetings were established in the West of England. In many other places also such meetings were inaugurated, and there was consequently much joy among many christians. It resulted, to a large extent, in the recovery of "the liberty with which the Christ has made us free." At the meetings the believers became diligent students of the Word of God. Many of them came forth like Apollos of old, "mighty in the Scriptures." But I need not dwell upon this. The meetings of which we speak were at first known as "Believers' Meetings," but by degrees became more generally recognised as "Brethren's Meetings," and eventually all who were thus associated were recognised as "the Brethren," or by the simple designation "Brethren."

It may be that at the outset some confusion of thought prevailed with reference to the terms "breaking of bread," as found in the Acts and in Luke 24, and "the Lord's Supper," as in 1 Cor. 11. It seems inexplicable that, notwithstanding the fact that this latter scripture is furnished for the guidance of all that

in every place invoke the name of Jesus Christ our Lord (see 1 Cor. 1. 2), yet the expression "breaking of bread" was preferred, and became generally adopted. But that those dear saints should have spread the Lord's Table in the morning instead of the evening of the first day of the week is quite incomprehensible. Scripture affords no sanction for such a course. Quite otherwise, but I do not further dwell upon that point here. In a little book, which is being prepared for press, entitled, "The Revival of the Lord's Supper," I have, by the grace of our God, reviewed that subject very fully.

As the knowledge of the revealed will and ways of our blessed God has increased by study of the Scriptures, under the effectual guidance of the Holy Spirit, the meetings of which we speak have come to be recognised by the divinely-given term "Assemblies." Indeed, from the first, that is what they were. For we know that the assembly of God is an assembly of believers—of *believers only*. And this divine requirement has been strictly observed from the beginning. There was a sort of shyness as to fully recognising the position in which our gracious Lord had set the believers as members of His body. Indeed, the word in Matt. 18. 20 has been quoted, quite in separation from its context in the preceding verse, as the basis of our coming together, even to the Lord's Supper. Such a quotation might perhaps help any unacquainted with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: but now, knowing that in one Spirit we were all baptised (immersed) into one body, and were all made to drink of one Spirit, *to come together* is a *normal condition* with us. We are an ecclesia, whether assembled together for worship or not.

Hitherto the assemblies have been maintained upon the principle of coming together to break bread, and the practice has been to receive the saints to the Lord's Table, or, alas, put them away from the Lord's Table. Such language is, surely, quite foreign to the Word of God. The assembly of God receives into *its bosom*, with open arms, all who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ. They are not received as strangers, or in the way of favour, but as brethren beloved. The Word admits no question as to whether they are to be received or not.

All are not equally lovely, or all equally approved. Some indeed may seem to be very undesirable as companions. Yet, according to the mind of our gracious Lord, such may be really *necessary*. What saith the Scripture? "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Yea, much rather those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: and those of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour, and our uncomely members have more abundant comeliness. Whereas our comely have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honour to that which lacked: that there should be NO SCHISM in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Cor. 12. 21-25).

The only question—the great question—to decide is, Are they truly believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, and walking worthily? A place at the Lord's Table belongs to every disciple of Jesus our Lord. The Lord's Supper is not the basis of the assembly of God. A christian is received into the local assembly—and there he is

entitled to all the blessings and privileges of the house of God. The Lord of the assembly has entitled him or her to everything in common with all fellow-disciples, including of course the high honour of a place at the Lord's Table.

While the Lord's Table was made the bond of *union*, the lack of *unity* was, alas, abundantly manifest, for each community of Brethren required conformity to its chosen tenets—hence uncertainty, instability, and unholy strife. The assembly of God is to exemplify the *lovely obedience* of the bride of the Christ. (“As the assembly is subject to Christ, so the wives also to their husbands, *in everything*.” Eph. 5. 24.)

Is it not evident to us all that the time has come for an unqualified adherence to that which is written? Let us praise our gracious God for having wrought in us this conviction. At the beginning of this dispensation it pleased the Lord to disclose truth concerning His ecclesia, etc., to His saints little by little: for we read, “The word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12. 24); and again, “So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed” (Acts 19. 20). Thus also in these last days, He has graciously and *gradually* brought back the fulness of His truth to our hearts and consciences. May we not say, So mightily has the word of God prevailed with us?

The only question now is, What saith the Scripture? If any think otherwise, may they recall to mind these words of the Apostle, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3. 5).

The following may serve to illustrate the bearing of what is presented in this paper:



A brother in the Lord, who for many years has been exercised, yea, much pained indeed, that the Lord's Supper has not generally been kept in the evening; for a long time partook of it at his own house; thus holding himself aloof from Brethren's meetings. When, however, he saw that in standing apart, he was disregarding the unity of the body, and thereby ignoring the unity of the Spirit; he forthwith took his place in the assembly where he resides. This involved his acceptance of the prevailing custom, that of breaking bread in the morning. He did not, however, dismiss his convictions as to the error of that practice, but though constrained to break the bread and drink the cup, in fellowship with the assembly, he continues praying the Lord to restore all to divine order. It is evident that when once the ecclesia of God is understood, one cannot break away from, or remain aloof from, the local assembly where one resides, without grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

Beloved brethren, has not our gracious Lord given us this enlightenment to the intent that all breaches may be healed; that at His coming "we may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless in His sight" (2 Pet. 3. 14). What a joy to abandon all our "reasonings." Is not His name to be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"? (Isa. 9. 6).

Surely He has not committed to His ecclesia power to rule! He is Lord. 'Tis His to command, 'tis ours to obey.

When Paul had reminded the Ephesian elders of his own faithfulness while with them, and had warned of troubles which would surely come upon them, he

found comfort in being able to say also, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20. 32).

God and the Word of His grace! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! together with the living, mighty, word. These are with us. Here is power; all else is weakness.

The number of the assemblies of God should be multiplied all over the world. Experience seems to show that assemblies with moderate numbers, in many localities, are more to be desired than great assemblies in few places. Perhaps our gracious Lord has furnished a model for us, as to numbers, on an occasion when feeding a multitude: "He said unto His disciples, Make them sit down in companies, about *fifty* each" (Luke 9. 14).

If any of my readers should be led to assemble—a very few believers may unitedly wait upon the Lord about it. Nothing should be undertaken without much and earnest prayer to our God and Father. When all is made clear before the Lord; and the guidance of the Holy Spirit counted upon; take action, in the fear of God.

The writer will be happy to give counsel to any who would be helped thereby. Address—W. S., SENR., c/o MR. HIGNETT, Printer, Littlehampton.

I remain, with brotherly love to  
all the saints of God,

Yours faithfully in Christ Jesus our Lord,

W. S., SENR.

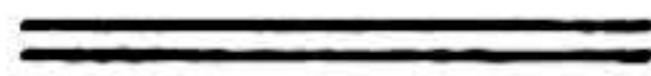
# SUPPLEMENT

TO

## THE ECCLESIA:

THAT IS,

## THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.



### *THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY.\**

*In every locality where Christians dwell there is an Assembly of God. The Christians who reside there constitute the Assembly.*



THERE may perhaps be no manifestation of an Assembly, yet in fact an Assembly of God is there! Every one of those Christians is a member of the body of the Christ: and not one of them can be dispensed with. See 1 Cor. 12. 18-27.

These Christians may be quite ignorant of the fact that they are incorporated by the Holy Spirit—"By one Spirit immersed into one body." But the lack of

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\* N.B.—In the literal translation of the New Testament by Rotherham, the inappropriate word Church is quite discarded. The translator renders the Greek word "Ecclesia" by its correct English equivalent "Assembly."

Scriptural knowledge on this precious subject does not weaken or nullify what the Scriptures declare to us.

Alas, through defective teaching, many a true believer in our Lord Jesus Christ is left in uncertainty as to his or her salvation. Yet for every believer our gracious Lord has spoken the SURE word, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, HATH eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5. 24, R.V.)

By inattention to this, present joy is lost, yet the believer is saved. In like manner the Scriptures leave no uncertainty concerning the Assembly of God, yet the Word of God on this important subject is unheeded. The living members of the body of the Christ—the local Assembly of God—remain quiescent, as if lifeless. In their condition of inactivity (as an Assembly, of course I mean), Christians, although actually united by the Holy Spirit, know not the joy of UNITY—while, alas, "Our Father" is robbed of the high range of united worship which He has ordained in and through Jesus Christ our Lord. "The Father SEEKETH such to worship Him."

Now let these silent Christians be aroused as from slumber, let them assemble themselves together, as it is written, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10. 25).

Meet for united study of the Word of God. Repeat the happy experience of the little group of godly men in Dublin, see page 9. It is marvellous how rapidly believers grow in knowledge and in all grace by prayerful, UNITED study of the Scriptures.

Let us remember that in apostolic days, great numbers of the disciples who were gathered from the Gentiles were totally ignorant of the ways of God. Yet writing to Corinth the apostle said, "I speak as to *wise men* judge ye what I say" (1 Cor. 10. 15).

Great and constant attention should be given to the two epistles to the Corinthians. Herein we are furnished with divine instructions for the PRACTICAL management of the Assemblies of God. Then study ALL the epistles. These writings are all specially addressed to the ASSEMBLIES for building up the people of God in this present dispensation. Then read through ALL the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer. He is with us to "lead us into ALL the truth."

Godly men whose hearts are stirred by this appeal will do well to consider the counsel offered in my letter to *The Christian*, 16th March, 1905, now reprinted in my book, "The Revival of the Lord's Supper."\*

The only name that a local Assembly may be known by, according to the Scriptures, must be derived from the place where it is situate.

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\* "THE REVIVAL OF THE LORD'S SUPPER," price 6d. post free, of W. Hignett, Publisher, Littlehampton.

In all our assembly construction let us have in mind that which is written for our guidance. "According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3. 10-15).

We must never forget that the Ecclesia is the Lord's own building—see page 4—we are His workmen, so we MUST go by His book of instructions.

It is good moreover to ponder God's word to Moses: "See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8. 5, R.V.) Now that was a worldly sanctuary, but the Assembly of God is a living Temple, destined for the heavens: the living stones gathered out upon earth, and prepared for heavenly glory. Even now occupied by the Holy Spirit.

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