

A  
LETTER  
TO THE SAINTS IN LONDON,  
AS TO THE  
PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST  
IN THE CHURCH.

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# A LETTER

## TO THE SAINTS IN LONDON.

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I FEEL that the importance of the question involved in the letters of our brother Mr. Hargrove demand some notice, while all that is personal I shall of course entirely pass by. The principle, without wishing to diminish the moral importance, in its place, of what passes between brethren, is too important to connect it with what is personal. As to the historical part, I can only make one observation. I have been more or less in all the gatherings, or nearly so, (there may be exceptions I am unaware of, but, at any rate, in those generally known) where our brother has been, and I have never found my ministry in the least degree hindered, nor any unwillingness or indisposition in my brethren to give it the fullest scope.\* I have felt on my own part a danger, (as it would be of any active mind) from desire of their blessing, and interest in the word of God, of absorbing too much the ministry in my own person, and so accustoming souls to lean on it. I trust I have watched against it, as unfeignedly anxious, as I truly am, that the smallest gift in the humblest brother should have the freest scope for its exercise ; but I never found any the smallest disposition

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\* I do not refer to Plymouth here one way or other. It is a case which stands on its own ground.

to hinder the exercise of any gift I had. Would I had more grace to know how to use it right: I freely admit it would be a fleshly evil so hindering it; and folly on their part: for Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, are *theirs*.

But, as to the principle in question, brethren must not suppose that it is a question agitated between certain individual brethren in London or elsewhere. It is most clearly a great question of principle regarding the position and walk of the saints which has arisen wherever that testimony of God specially committed, as I believe, to the brethren has existed. It is a question of vast importance: a principle resisted abroad as well as in England; and the resistance to which is always connected with the establishment, in one shape or other, of a clergy under the title of ministry. All I shall attempt here is to set the principle clear. There is, I fully believe, as real a question of God's truth as in Luther's days, I do not say as important a one; because in Luther's time the question was one of the ground of individual salvation, of the basis of our standing with God. Whereas the question now at issue is the position and standing of the Church of the saints gathered when they are saved. But no one, not I am sure our brother Mr. Hargrove himself, will think this a trifling question. It is closely connected with Christ's glory, and the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. The question in Luther's time was the value and efficacy of Christ's work, or, in other words, justification by faith. He assumed what existed to be the Church. The question now is the presence and power of the Holy Ghost as forming and embodying the Church in unity. This evidently is important while it has been accompanied among the brethren with the revival, as I judge, of the clear doctrine of justification by faith, which was much buried under other collateral doctrines, as regeneration and its proofs, which had really taken the place of justification by faith; so that, in general, assurance of salvation was rare, and considered to be a matter of spiritual attain-

ment.—Besides, there are truths to which God recalls the saints as being important at such or such a time, as leading to peculiar and needed blessings, or as bearing on peculiar evils or dangers, and against which therefore the malice of the enemy will be particularly directed, to oppose or undermine them. Such I believe the doctrine of the Holy Ghost's presence in the Church to be at this time. The unity of the body as Christ's spouse, *separate from evil*, is closely connected, yea, identified with this great doctrine, which is founded on the exaltation of Christ as Son of man to the right hand of God in testimony of the full completeness of His work, and His infinite favour with God. And hence its connection with the full, free, assurance of salvation in the soul, and the joy of adoption by the Holy Ghost. No one taught of God could knowingly undervalue such a doctrine: and I do believe, especially, that no one specially taught of God now, "men having understanding of the times," but will on the contrary feel its peculiar vital importance, as ministered of God in the Church, for saving souls, and the Church itself, from the current delusions of the day. This is the question before us. There are three great points connected with the doctrine of Christ; or positions in which He may be viewed. A crucified Christ accomplishing the work of redemption; in virtue of which, as testified of in resurrection, justification is the portion of the believer. An exalted Christ; in whose name, and by whose sending, the Holy Ghost the Comforter is come down on earth, and dwells in the Church. And, Christ coming again in person. Now the first of these, namely justification by faith, was preached distinctly by Luther, and souls were delivered, and many peoples set free from the burden of Popery. But the Holy Ghost sent down here, though taught in a measure as a truth, formed no part of that which characterized the Church, and therefore it fell under the power of the magistrate when delivered from the Pope. The doctrine of the Lord's second coming fell into the hands of real fanatics who would have set up

what they called the fifth monarchy by the sword; and in Germany did attempt it, and held a city they called their Zion for some time under Munzer.

That which characterized the ministry and testimony of the brethren, however feeble, and feeble they were, was, with the accompanying revival of assurance by faith in the simple testimony of redemption, the bringing out, and walking in the faith of, the two latter doctrines:—namely, the Holy Ghost in the Church, and the coming again in person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this ministry was blessed, both in gathering many into a simple position by it, and extending the happy influence of these truths among many who were not so gathered. With this connected itself the unity of the Church as the body of Christ by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and that separate from the world as the bride of the Lamb. A comparison of what the Church was at first when filled with the Spirit, led them to the sense of our present ruined state, and to seek in earnest devotedness more conformity to its early path, and that nothing should be owned which was not of the Holy Ghost. And they waited for God's Son from heaven. If the presence of the Spirit gave them the consciousness of being the bride, He made them also earnestly desire the coming of the bridegroom, and the joy of that day when Christ should come and receive them to Himself, and take the kingdom and the glory.

They entered in Spirit in their little measure into that word: "The Spirit and the bride say come," and they were happy and blessed. And where, beloved brethren, let me ask you with the apostle, is that blessedness ye spake of? Did ye suffer so many things in vain, or for an error, if it be yet in vain? Did you begin in the Spirit, or was it all a delusion of your imagination which wiser minds have discovered, and that you are glad to give decently up, and to end in the flesh.

Now the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church as one body was, (with the waiting for Christ's coming,)

the grand doctrine on which the whole testimony of the brethren was founded. And this it is which it is sought to deprive you of. Let us not deceive ourselves; this is what is in question. It will soon be seen every where, save as this truth itself is forgotten any where. It may be clothed in terms which may seem not to deny it, because that would alarm, in terms suited, alas, to the failure of spiritual power, and therefore of discernment, which may be found among us. It may begin in practice in one place, and be avowed in doctrine in another. It may change its shape where it is detected, and testified against. But the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and His presence as the power of the unity of the body of Christ, is what is in question.

I dare say it may not be admitted: but if one comes to rob me of my treasure, his not telling me he is, nor admitting he is, cannot satisfy me. But this, perhaps, it will be said, they do not mean to do. I will admit they may be ignorant of the truth itself, and therefore of the loss of it, and therefore not be aware of the mischief they are doing. But, if one is urging the vessel on the shoals, and he is mentally innocent, because he does not know them, that will not content me as a passenger if I know, nay, not even if I suspect, them. But is it denied? Is it not admitted? It has been distinctly taught that the acting of the Holy Ghost in the body being in the members, the presence of the Holy Ghost practically was by the teachers. Now, because there is truth in this, and that the Holy Ghost does act by the teachers, the denying such a doctrine is treated as if it was denying the Holy Ghost's acting in the teachers, and, in a word, denying ministry. But it is no such thing. What is affirmed is the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body the Church. No doubt when there, He acts among other things by teachers, &c.; but He is present in the body the Church. And any one can see that assuming His acting in the teachers, and denying His dwelling in the body as such; or denying His acting properly in the way of gift in any,

but that grace just sanctifies natural talent and education ; and that there is no dwelling in the body distinct from the members, (these teachers being the members who are to act,) is throwing the whole matter into the hands of certain persons who have more natural talent, to the exclusion of the body. It is the reconstituting a clergy who form the Church, and who are to judge of the qualifications of others whom they admit into their ranks : for this is demanded also. It is just the clergy over again. I recognize that God forms the vessel individually for service as well as puts a gift into it, when I look at the individual. I have no doubt that the blessed Apostle Paul was a man of most extraordinary natural character. But this truth, which I find in Scripture, does not make me deny that the Holy Ghost dwells *in the Church*.

But I will first bring out the idea before the minds of brethren, that by it they may be able through grace to judge of the statements by which it is pared down and destroyed, and what they are losing for their souls if these statements are listened to. Our brother Mr. Hargrove is pleased to call this a debasing explanation of the end of Eph. ii. Let us remember the question : the dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Church as such. Take Mr. Hargrove's own account of it, "A dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church apart and distinct from the members, is what I confess my inability to receive." Again, "But from the way in which I have heard some speak of the person of the Holy Ghost in the individual, and, distinct from this, the person of the Holy Ghost in the Church—the thought has arisen in my mind which one almost fears to express—Do they believe in two Holy Ghosts?" Again, "I see these precious promises of the Spirit's abiding and presence during our Lord's absence in the 14th, 15th, and 16th of John, but surely no dwelling here, nor through the Acts of the Apostles, distinct from the individual believer." We have then distinctly before us the question. It is denied that these two things are distinctively true,—the Holy Ghost in the individual, and

the Holy Ghost in the Church. I find this fully confirmed in the suppressed tract,\* where the blessing of the body is treated as the aggregate of the blessing of the individual members; referring to John xiv. 23, and the dwelling in the body, as I have spoken of it, is treated as a debasing view of Eph. ii. My view which is commented on, is: "The Holy Ghost dwelling in and making one the body of Christ, and acting by every one of the members in one way or another:" and, "the Holy Ghost working in the several living members for the good of the body."

I now turn to the main point,—God's dwelling with man. This I believe to be the peculiar and special blessing of man, and the highest honour that can be conferred on him; unless it be his being actually in glory with the Lord, when something more is added; being like the Lord and with Him. In paradise this seems to have been that which shewed the dreadful failure. God comes to walk in the garden, but Adam a sinner was not there to meet Him. But to refer to what is more distinctly stated in Scripture:—when Israel was brought out of Egypt, and the Spirit inspired the song of triumph, what was the leading thought? "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation." So in God's own preparation of it. "In the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." This leading thought of what distinguished Israel is clearly a distinct one from dwelling or acting in an individual. Further, this is a constant thought, as distinguishing the people of God. So in Exod. xxix. 45, 46, "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land

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\* I have only referred to this, that I may not mistake our brother's meaning; and quote nothing, on the ground of its being suppressed.



of Egypt, *that I may dwell among them* ; I am the Lord their God." So, 2 Chron. vi. 1, 2, "The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness, but I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever." So, 1 Kings vi. 13 ; Ex. xxv. 8 ; Ezek. xliii. 7. So indeed to the same purpose, Deut. xxiii. 14. But it is needless to multiply more passages.\* We may take notice in all this that it has nothing whatever to do with the dwelling in an individual. It was a distinct thought altogether. The serious question is, are we worse off now as to this. There were then also operations of the Holy Ghost in the way of prophecy and testimony, but it was a distinct thing. We may expect this to be modified in many ways when the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven ; because in Christ, where our proper acceptance is, we are characterized rather as dwelling with God,—in His house. Still the other is true by the Holy Ghost sent down. What we have to enquire is, whether this presence of God in the midst of His people is spoken of in the New Testament, and that distinct from His gracious presence in the individual. If there be any material modification of it, this may also claim our attention. It would be difficult to suppose that there was less real presence of God in the midst of His people now, than under the Old Testament. It is true we look for His presence in glory : but surely meanwhile the main doctrine, as to the actual condition and existence of the Church, is the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven : as truly and really the presence of God in the midst of His people as the Shechinah of glory. If God was in His holy temple then, God is in His holy temple now—most truly, though after another manner. Not merely in individuals, the aggregate of whose indi-

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\* It is the final testimony of triumph and blessing: "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

vidual blessing is the blessing of the whole, but in His spiritual temple—the Church of the living God. And here I would remark, before adducing the proofs of this, that, according to the system sought to be imposed upon us, not only is there no distinct dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Church other than in the members, but though the term be used, there is none in the members neither, save as just influencing graciously *every saint*. It amounts to the general idea of grace, or gracious influence, sanctifying natural or acquired powers.\* Living power by the moving of the Holy Ghost there is none. This living power in the members working to the good of the body is gone. Gift is denied absolutely in the *members*—none exists any more, (grace may act on their hearts), and the Holy Ghost does not dwell in the body *apart* from the members: so that really between what His action in, or rather on, the members, on one part is reduced to, and the denial of His dwelling or acting in the body apart from the members on the other, His personal presence as acting in any power in the Church is wholly denied.† It may not be in words: this I should think much less of; the faith of simple saints might at once meet it; but it is undermined and taken from us without our being aware of it. It is in vain to cry out about its not being fair to impute to a person what he denies. Are the saints to be robbed of their heritage and blessing because he who does so denies he is doing it? It may be through ignorance, but it is much fairer to detect than to deny it, if the thing be so. Compare what is said by Mr. H. of gift in the members, and then what is said of the body not having it apart from the members, and see what the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body the Church, is reduced to,

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\* Hence natural or acquired powers alone make the minister; for gift there is none; and surely other saints not in the ministry are sanctified by the Spirit's influence.

† He sanctifies natural qualities, but nothing more.

compared with what is said in Scripture. Not only as to gift, but in personal presence acting, guiding, animating, contending against lusts, helping infirmities, bearing witness Himself with our spirit, and a thousand passages relative to that blessed Comforter who should abide with us for ever, dear to every Christian. The writer thinks the saint can act by the Holy Ghost, indeed, but it is no longer the Holy Ghost by us.\* This, I am satisfied, is merely substituting man for the Holy Ghost. Man may speak by the Spirit, may use Him, may act under His

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\* In every shape and way the *acting of the Holy Ghost Himself* is denied. Suppose a person believes he is led of the Spirit of God to exhort his brethren, I say nothing now of gift, this is denounced as "impulse." Man may act by the Spirit, but this would be the Spirit acting by man, and this cannot be. The Holy Ghost could not, on Mr. Hargrove's system, lead any one to speak, for it is quite clear this would be impulse. He may sanctify natural qualities, and the man who possesses them may minister. And hence the avowed denial of an open to minister. "But if these gifts be not abiding with us, what then? Is there still to be an open door? I should say as confidently no. Why should an open be left for what we have not?" And who is to speak? Persons of proved competency. And how are they to be proved if there is not to be an open? But the answer is ready—sent by the leaders of principal meetings to try their hand in the country, and these leaders are exclusively "the other" who are to judge (1 Cor. xiv. 29). This is the avowed plan elsewhere. It would be much more honest to fall openly into the old dissenting plan, for it is nothing whatever but setting it up again, and I do not doubt there are many men of God there. But my answer to Mr. Hargrove's tract is, I believe in the Holy Ghost; not merely as sanctifying competent persons, but as acting as a living person in the Church of God, and God present in the Church through the Spirit. It may be well to add here, what may perhaps seem incredible, that the authoritative explanation at Plymouth of this matter, in commenting on Mr. Hargrove's tract and the expression "meeting the Holy Ghost," is, that *they* go to meet God and not the Holy Ghost, and *we* go to meet the Holy Ghost and not God. The charge against the brethren, untrue as it is, is sufficient, as well as the statement they make as to themselves, to shew their views on the subject, if view it can be called. Any comment on it here would carry me too far.

gracious influence, but He, the Holy Ghost, does not act. That would be impulse. No one pretends to inspiration in the sense of new revelation, but simply that the Holy Ghost acts in leading, guiding, filling, and using the vessel. That is, He acts by us. The distinction, however, as Mr. H. gives it, is wholly unscriptural. The Holy Ghost speaking by a man, and a man speaking by the Holy Ghost, are used as equivalent terms: as Acts i. 16, vi. 10, xx. 23, xxi. 4, 11, compare xi. 28, xxviii. 25, Mark xii. 36, compare Matt xxii. 43. In the author's hands the difference of the expression most clearly amounts to the lowest Arminianism\* as to the Holy Ghost. That is, man acts by it, but the Holy Ghost does not act by man. And I beg the attention of brethren to this—it is just simply not believing in the personal presence and actings of the Holy Ghost. If this statement makes our brother angry, I am sorry for it; but he cannot expect to launch forth statements into the midst of brethren *calling on them to retrace their steps* in so many words, and not have his statements judged. I am satisfied from reading and re-reading his tracts, that it is simple unbelief in the presence and actings of the Holy Spirit. And now to the statements of the New Testament on the subject. That the presence of the Comforter is the distinguishing truth of this dispensation, founded on the work of Christ, I ought not to be obliged to insist on. Suffice it to say, that it is on the fact of this presence that the Lord grounds the advantage of His going away. "If I go not away the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go away I will send Him unto you." And all the blessing, communion, and testimony (save the personal testimony of the disciples as living with Him) is founded on the presence, personal presence, of this other Comforter. This is evidently of the last importance. Here it is well to remark on the force of this word Comforter. He was one who *by being down here* was

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\* See pp. 20, 21, 22, 23, of "Some Thoughts."

to take the place of Jesus when He went away; and was to take up, and carry on, the cause of the disciples as Christ had done, only more powerfully, in a certain way, because of Christ's work and exaltation. It is the same word as is said of Christ: "we have an *advocate* with the Father,"—one who is charged with, and maintains, our cause. This the Holy Ghost was to do, and guide, comfort, sustain, direct the disciples as Jesus had done, with the difference noted. And further—He was not to leave them like Christ. He was to abide with them for ever. This name—of one come down to take Christ's place—and abiding for ever, is of all moment in this case. For the Holy Ghost come as the Paraclete in place of Christ was to be amongst them as Christ was. Christ had acted among, and for, and by them too: not they merely by Him: though no doubt what they did when sent out was by His power, as in His name. Now, they were to have another Paraclete who was to be among them in His stead (though glorifying Him) and to act among, and for, and by them, and lead, and guide, and connect, and direct, and sustain them, and to be with them *for ever*. This was not merely natural qualities sanctified by grace, and man acting by the Spirit. It was a living divine person acting for them, and by them. That He, being grieved, and withal in the sovereign counsels of God, much of that in which He showed His power is lost is true: but to say, because man has abused this grace, and feebleness has followed, because God has not honoured those who did not honour Him, or because the flesh has abused the doctrine, that He does not dwell amongst us, is merely that kind of unbelief, hateful to God, which is called in Scripture "tempting God." The place was called Massah, and Meribah, because there they tempted God, saying, is the Lord amongst us or no. And here I will remark on the "with us," and "in us." The distinction is perfectly scriptural. The Lord said (John xiv. 25) "These things I have said unto you, being yet present with you" *παρ' ὑμῶν μένων*—the exact phrase which is used concerning the Holy Ghost, translated:

“He dwelleth with you,” παρ’ ὑμῖν μένει. Christ was yet dwelling with them, but another Comforter was to come whom they would know (though the world would not because it did not see Him) because He dwelt with them: and then He adds, as to the manner, (which was not yet so of Jesus come in the flesh) a new thing, and therefore put in future tense, “He shall be *in* you.” This new Paraclete was to be thus their counsellor, guide, orderer, as Jesus had been, manage their cause and affairs as dwelling with them. Hence we see the importance of distinguishing this living presence *and acting* of the Comforter from a man’s using his talents in a sanctified way by grace. But further, this is fully brought out in Scripture as a distinct thing from being in individual members. Both are spoken of; but they are spoken of to different purposes in Scripture. “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,” &c. (1 Cor. vi. 19). Here accordingly it is applied to *personal sanctification*. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,” (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). Here it is clearly the Church of God. The building of God which some might corrupt by false doctrine. They were God’s building. The Spirit of God does then clearly distinguish the dwelling in the individual and the dwelling in the body. And this is so much the same thought, and connected with the idea of the presence of God in Israel, that in 2 Cor. vi. 16 it is distinctly introduced. “For ye 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.” And now I would ask, what is there debasing in the blessed doctrine that God dwells in His holy temple? We might perhaps say (were it not for the precious blood of Christ which has cleansed us) that it was a debasing idea that the Holy Ghost should dwell in our poor wretched bodies as His

temple. But His testimony is to the value of that precious blood as cleansing us, so that His presence in the believer is a glorious testimony to the infinite preciousness of Christ's work, and His presence at the right hand of God the Father. But His presence in the Church as His temple, though no doubt founded on the same great truth, is at least more easily apprehended. Because when I think of the Church I do not think of the flesh. I think of the body only in its redeemed character as the body and spouse of Christ; something He loves as His *own* flesh. The individual natural evil of man is lost in the thought of the preciousness of Christ's body. Here, my soul says easily, the Holy Ghost can dwell. It belongs to Christ, whom the Spirit glorifies. Both we have seen are true, and distinctly true; but, when I think of a man, I think readily of what he is in his infirmity: and though it would be wrong, might be easily led to say, can the Holy Ghost dwell in such poor vile creatures? but, when I think of the Church I do not think of the first Adam state. I think of Christ's body—His bride, of what is one with Him, His flesh. Here, my heart says, the Holy Ghost ought to be. But, having seen that the Scripture does speak of both distinctly, that is, that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that the body the Church is so too, I would quote some passages which speak of both one and the other, that we may see that both are fully taught in the word. We read (John iv.), "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John vii. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; and this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive." These are evidently personal and individual. And this presence of the Holy Ghost is connected with life, joy, the sealing of our persons, and the certainty of salvation, and that, known in our own hearts, and strength to resist temptation, and fruits against which there is no law. He that stablisheth us together 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. So that we know that all the promises of God are in Him yea and amen, to the glory of God *by us*. We are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. Here He is acting in, and on, and in testimony with, the individual as himself livingly united to Christ. But there is another truth besides. God is to be in His temple. What is a temple without God? There was *Israel* where God dwelt; and *a temple* built with hands, where God vouchsafed in a certain manner to dwell. Then Christ was the true temple, as we know, when he was here; as He took the place of Israel as the true vine. Is there none now? Or is it only the individual poor weak saint that is so? No. God has broken down the middle wall of partition, and through the glorious, though seemingly debasing, work of Christ has made both one, making peace, and reconciling both Jew and Gentile in one body to God by the cross, and has built them up together to be His habitation through the Spirit. In a word, the Church of God, not looked at as individuals, but on the contrary as brought together into one body by this glorious work of Christ, is God's habitation through the Spirit. So, as the Apostle draws the consequence, there is one body and one Spirit. Mr. H. may be pleased to call this, to us, glorious and blessed truth "a debasing view of it." I must leave him to his own view of it, but, I apprehend such an expression is his unconsciously passing sentence on his own doctrine about it to every spiritual mind, and not on what he condemns. And it is against this blessed truth that all the effort of the enemy is now directed—a body formed into one by the cross of Christ breaking down the middle wall of partition, and the presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth consequent upon the exaltation of the Head, so that there should be one body and one Spirit: God having exalted Christ above all principality and power, and given him to be Head over all things to the Church. The same doctrine is taught in 1 Cor. xii. xiv. as in Ephesians. Now, that the Holy Ghost so dwelling in the



body acts in the members, no one denies, *save* those who hold Mr. H.'s views. For this acting of the Holy Ghost in the members is proper gift, as any one reading 1 Cor. xii. may easily see, which he entirely repudiates. But, though He acts in the members, His dwelling is in the body. We might as well say as to my soul, because it acts livingly and sets my members in motion that it was only as dwelling in the members that it did so, as hold the view promulgated in the letters of Mr. Hargrove, for "so is Christ." For surely the Holy Ghost is much more, as the other Comforter, an independent living person and agent distributing severally to every one as He will, than my feeble soul is in my body; and in which of the members was He acting when the place shook, where they were assembled. And hence, I am persuaded, it is that one can be made partaker of the Holy Ghost, as in Heb. vi., and yet lost. Looked at as the individual seal and earnest, by which, after believing, we are sealed to the day of redemption, that cannot be: but as dwelling in power according to the principle of this dispensation in the Church it is supposed we may partake of it, not as the power and seal of living union (in that case it would bring forth fruit meat for him by whom it was dressed), but acting in divine ministry and energy in the midst of the Church as a person dwelling there. God making it His habitation by the Spirit, so that one could lie to Him. For in lying to the Holy Ghost they had lied to God. So the stranger fell down and confessed that God was in them of a truth. Not merely in the individual who spoke, but in the body, as He was lied to not in any working in a member; **HE WAS THERE**. There might be persons, we know there were, who were false brethren in whom He did not dwell as a seal or earnest at all, but He was in the Church. And it is this presence of the Holy Ghost in the body as sent which constitutes and is the power of its unity. Grace acting in the members may aid to maintain this in the bond of peace, but the great and blessed doctrinal truth we have in the Ephesians, and 1st Corinthians, and elsewhere, is that the Holy Ghost,

the other Comforter sent down from heaven, is the constituent power of unity to the body. No grace in the members, nor sanctifying natural talents, save as practically maintaining it, has any thing to do with this. They are in this individuals as before. And now suppose man has grieved this Holy Spirit, that the Church has lost many of His manifestations; supposing its practical unity is gone and scattered—that the wolf, because there were hirelings, has caught the sheep (though not out of Christ's hand) and scattered them, and the ruin is felt. Am I to confess the sin of man, and say, "let God be true, but every man a liar," and therefore recur in faith to the promise that the Comforter should abide for ever with us. Or to say that unity is gone. That open for the Holy Ghost to act in the members is a "bygone mode of God's dealing in His house," because the Holy Ghost acts "neither *in mode* nor in measure, as in New Testament times." And therefore that we not having New Testament directions must make arrangements for ourselves as to ministry. The reason is indeed curious; that because the Holy Ghost by the apostle did arrange and order edification, we may do so too. There is this unhappy difference in the plan proposed; that the apostles added order to power, and left the door as open as before, we are to arrange because there is no power left at all, and "if so.....: wherefore should there be an open door." Our brother may say the Holy Ghost remains. I ask what does He do? Sanctify natural talents, and then they arrange how they are to speak by His help. But His acting is denied altogether, it is impulse. There is to be no open for what does not exist.

That is, our brother, because man has perhaps abused a principle, instead of correcting the abuse, denies the blessing altogether. It is just simple unbelief in the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost. He presses us to "retrace our steps."\* To have no open ministry.†

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\* pp. 29 and 38.

† p. 7.

At any rate until the Holy Ghost comes as heretofore again, and meanwhile to act on the principle that there are no gifts at all. For my own part I desire through grace to correct the flesh whenever it appears, but I am not going to retrace my steps: I "fear" to do so, because I know God led me on the road. I have found the blessing. Were we happiest when this was *believed*, or since it has been denied. And if we have failed in maintaining, or in using the blessing, are we to humble ourselves, or, as our brother suggests, to deny the blessing. We found it when there was no such unbelief or teaching as our brother's amongst us. There was blessing enough to bring him out, and to cheer and help us on, in spite of much weakness and infirmity. And I shall not deny God in His truth and blessing because man knows not how to use it, if it even be so, but I do not believe it. We may be humbled, but God will help and meet us according to our faith. I own a ministry, have always owned it: but I cannot deny the blessed truth of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the body. And here I will add, I do not say among the gathered brethren. The only difference as to those is they have acted together on this truth.

The Holy Ghost in the whole body may own our brother's gift elsewhere, and his in whose chapel it appears he ministers. Only he denies a blessed doctrine which God has taught, and I fully trust will maintain among us. And let it be here remembered that stated ministry has never been denied, but always in exercise, amongst us, always owned in principle. In half, or more, of the services one who had gift has exercised his gift on his responsibility to Christ. This is known to every one. And for my own part I recognize it fully, be it one or two if they agree together to do it. The teachers have waited on their teaching. It is an utter untruth or sheer prejudice to deny or lose sight of this. It is only in the meetings for worship that this has not been the case. The profit of a stated ministry, all that is true in a one man ministry, has been in the fullest exercise among brethren. In their worship they have not sought sermons, but the

presence of God, the accomplishment of that promise, that where two or three are gathered together in His name He will be in the midst of them. I avow I do not go there to hear a sermon; nor do I like to hear one. I go to worship, to find the Lord, and worship Him. And I judge that if brethren are become incapable of enjoying this, it is a very bad sign. I do *not* go with my "ears"\* there to hear man, however gifted, but to worship God; and I beg to press this on brethren. I feel thankful if any one be led of God, I trust we may be forgiven for still thinking this possible in spite of the efforts to rob us of it, to give a word of exhortation, or comfort. I know that the flesh has abused this, forgetting the word "swift to hear, slow to speak," "my brethren, be not many teachers." But I add *most decidedly* that though I have seen liberty used for licence, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, I have found where God was owned incomparably more of His presence and blessing than where man's arrangements as proposed by our brother have taken the place of God. There might be evils to deplore and to correct, but there was God to enjoy, because God was owned. Elsewhere I have found decent things of man, a fair shew in the flesh, but a sepulchre. The God I found my delight in was not there. For even God's grace, or gift, in teaching, is a wholly different thing from God's presence in the way of worship. But I add, that, where in worship this latter is slighted I never found even the former. It is written, "cursed is the man who putteth his trust in man." Correct the evils, brethren; but let us not disown God nor His goodness. If you cannot know His presence in worship, nor what the blessing of this is, humble yourselves. You have suffered great loss, you have spiritually declined. Forgive me. But if, which I cannot believe, for I at any rate have found it among you, you have forgotten this joy—pardon me here also,—I, poor

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\* See p. 27.

as I am, and I feel this unfeignedly, I have not forgotten it. I shall with His grace continue to trust Him. I will, if need be, begin afresh, and am not afraid of not finding His faithfulness and love, and of enjoying with a despised remnant that sweet and blessed fellowship with Him which He has granted us in times past. And, if I am to take my place among you, I shall freely exercise, when the just occasion offers, the ministry with which I believe God has entrusted me in my weakness, the gift of His grace; and, when we meet as saints, I shall be glad often to wait, not merely, as our brother proposes, to compose my spirit, to gather up my strength from the Lord, before I enter on His work, or open my mouth to speak in His name, but to wait in the hope to gather up strength through the blessing conferred upon some other beloved one of God, or by our joining together, whoever may be used as our mouth-piece, in thanksgiving, and prayer, and praise. For the joy of the Lord is our strength. I do not expect to be edified if the flesh act amongst us, and we should do well to own where it has been so. But I do expect the Lord's presence, and His acting amongst us, if we wait upon Him, to guide, to use, and to bless us. And to Him, and to that hope I cleave.

There are many collateral points in the letters, but I prefer confining myself to the great principle here. I would cite only the phrase, "I do not deny our power as to Rom. xii." How is it that our brother does not deny it when he has laboriously insisted that there are no gifts at all? In Rom. xii. it is said: "*having* therefore gifts," &c. That is, the service is founded on the existence of gifts. Our brother says we have them not. Is not this denying our power as to Rom. xii. He would begin, 'Not having gifts,' &c. Certain things are spoken of as gifts in a passage. Our brother teaches that we have these gifts (save one) but not as gifts. He would allow an open for edification—none of us would wish for any other. Now, before, he would allow none. I appeal to his own words. The open depended on gifts

and these are all gone. I add this here to say, that if he feels he has gone too far, and overstepped the teaching of the word, I do not want to shut the door on his return to it. Far from it. Let him frankly acknowledge it, he will have no reproach from me, who, if confident of truth, know my liability to mistake.