

THE SUPREME AUTHORITY AND OTHER MINISTRY

by

W. H. Westcott

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*“ In days of darkness we must not
alter God’s standards, nor may we
depart from God’s ways.”*

W.H.W.

William Henry Westcott

William Henry Westcott was called Home on Monday, November 9th, 1936 and buried at Grimsby on November 12th. He was 71. He had spent 47 years in the Lord's service 19 of these years in the Belgian Congo. As to the servant – his ministry and letters will speak for themselves. He was of all men most humble and yet without peer in the sweetness and power of the Ministry of Christ. Some samples of his Ministry and letters compose this booklet, which is sent forth with the fervent belief that the principles enunciated therein are timeless and will come as a spiritual tonic to those who care to read its contents. May the blessed Lord, Whom our brother, in his day, served so faithfully, be pleased to use again the ministry by which His servant sort to help the saints and glorify Him.

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THE SUPREME AUTHORITY

All authority as far as God is concerned is vested in the risen Saviour - all authority both in heaven and in earth. He said it before He went to heaven, for Matthew's Gospel does not carry us beyond resurrection, but it is no less true now that He has gone into heaven. He will infallibly secure all that God had purposed and promised for heaven and for earth.

There is no part of this universe that is not, by the will of God, put under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may go among all nations and claim people for Christ. The commission, as He gave it, is, "Go . . . to all nations." You may go into a monarchical country, civilised or savage, and while you seek to walk in subjection to the powers that be, you recognise that the Lord has sent you there to make disciples. What does it mean in a practical way? You might find that the authorities in either town or country may be inclined to resist the gospel. Our business is certainly not to be Socialists, or to defy the powers that be, but as simple christians, the servants of the Lord, we should have this fact written with fire in our souls, that wherever we are He can make room for His own word. Whatever may be the difficulties that the christians are exposed to, there is always the appeal to the highest authority in the universe.

It so happens that for some years we have been working in — and the authority we had to recognize was that of a well known State. We went as unknown individuals, known only to the Lord of Glory. As soon as we got there we found that the Roman Catholics claimed religious jurisdiction over all that section of the State where we proposed to settle, and they demanded our expulsion. Then it was rumoured that we were English spies, the consequence being that in addition to the religious influence of the Roman Catholics, we had the political powers of the State against us. The local commissaire said we must go out and find some other place. This was confirmed by the Vice-Governor in the capital. Eventually we had letters from the Governor himself to the effect that we should leave there. A Royal Commissioner came from the Sovereign. He investigated the correspondence and said, "I cannot find any reason why you should stay here; you must go."

Then, in order to gain by intrigue what they wanted for their own purpose, the Roman Catholics secured the passing of a decree by the King, the object of which was to oust us from the country. So, from the local official to the Government staff, then to the central authority itself, there was this authority of the earth demanding us to leave. By the grace of God we have continued our work there to this day. (1913 Ed.) God blew upon every intrigue.

At the time when we were in this state, crying to God to open the way the British Consul wrote us to say, "I write to you as a private individual, that if you will appeal to me as Consul I will see your case through." As much as to say, if you will only cast yourselves into the arms of the British Consul, he will use all the influences of Britain to gain your point. I replied, "It has been the habit of our souls to look to the Lord alone, but - while declining it - we thank you for your kind offer." Do you think God failed us?

Whatever may be the wall that is in front of you, yet, if you go forward in

simple confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, all authority is given to Him in heaven or earth. What He decrees, all kingdoms have no power to resist. We can reckon upon the Lord. Whatever difficulties we have, threatening worse and worse, let us lay this to heart, that our resource is in Christ Jesus the Lord. "All authority is given to Him in heaven and earth." Then we need not go outside of Christ to gain authority to go into any place or to work in any service, but we may appeal to Him immediately and directly, and we may do this among all nations.

If you are here in these christianised lands, which are fast apostatizing from the truth, with increasing difficulties for preaching the Gospel, you need not look to worldly authorities, nor seek any earthly patronage or influence, but look simply and directly to the Lord. Every simple and true-hearted Christian worker has immediate access to supreme authority. There is no need to conceal our christianity for the sake of diplomacy. You have got the authority of Christ, the Supreme Power in heaven and earth, to insist upon the performance of every part of His will.

He says, "I am with you always." The bright days, the dark days, until the end of the age. There is no diminishing of His authority.

PAUL'S TWO-FOLD MINISTRY

Colossians 1 vv. 21 - 29.

If we consider that Epaphras (Chap. 1.7) was the servant of God whom God used for the blessing of the Colossians, we might be tempted to ask, "Was Paul, in addressing this epistle to them, interfering with somebody else's work?"

It would be helpful for us all to remember that service as wrought of God in Christianity, is not the private property of a servant. Souls are reached by the Gospel to give them a living link with the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory. He uses one or another, but His object is to form this link with Himself.

In pursuance of this, it pleased Him to select the Apostle Paul to be the great sample for men of what the gospel can do, the great exponent of the ministry of the gospel, the great object-lesson of what the gospel is intended to produce. He was personally the pattern or delineation of how the gospel goes out, reaches the heart, and works marvellously in an individual for the very Christ against Whom he once fought.

In keeping with this object, it pleased the Lord to choose Paul to be also the great exponent of God's thoughts in connection with the assembly. You will notice how he is spoken of in the 23rd verse as "minister of the gospel" and then in the 25th verse as "minister of the assembly". It is not merely "a minister" but "minister".

We can then understand why he should address this epistle to the Colossians, even though he apparently had not been the instrument immediately used for their conversion. He tells them how great conflict he had for them. We should study this. With regard to the great outstanding facts of the gospel, it was remarked last

evening that "the gospel" must bring in the thought of Christ's resurrection. But I would go further. In I Cor. 15 Paul himself lays down for us the five great cardinal facts of the gospel - (1) How Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; (2) was buried; (3) rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; (4) was seen upon earth by a number of witnesses after His resurrection; (5) and last of all, says he, "was seen by me also". This "last of all" concerns Christ as seen in exaltation and heavenly glory.

Let us suppose then that we have a company of people really trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have in some small measure apprehended these great cardinal facts. They have believed upon Him; with the result that they are now received and pardoned, and they belong to Him. I think you can understand how this chosen vessel, this servant of God, would be exercised about presenting to them a full exposition of what the gospel is and what it had done for them.

Such a company was found in Rome. The Holy Spirit therefore used Paul and inspired him to write the Epistle to the Romans (to which I would like to refer for a few moments), to set forth the blessing brought about by the gospel.

In Romans 1 v.1 he speaks of his peculiar separation to the "Gospel of God" to bring it out in its true and complete character. Then he affirms it to be "Concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (read verses 3, 4). The first thing to which he calls attention in this wonderful introduction is the fact that it is the gospel or glad tidings of GOD. That is, God has glad tidings for men.

The second thing is that its subject and theme is His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The recipient of the glad tidings has his attention rivetted to what God has to say about Him. As we read on through the epistle we shall notice how the Spirit of God presses these two thoughts upon us. Quickened by the Spirit and eager to learn, we are conducted in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, over the whole ground of man's sin and guilt. The position and guilt of men is purposely and ruthlessly exposed, whether in the most naked and blatant forms, or covered by the veneer of philosophy and outward carnal religion. History, natural conscience, law, the Scriptures, all witness to the utterly hopeless condition, which had to be faced.

Where fear and shame, and the consciousness of the just condemnation of God, might reasonably overwhelm us, we are met by the glad tidings that the very One whose wrath we deserve to the last degree, is He who - with all our sins before Him - meets us with His grace through "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus". Thank God for the way He works. He himself is the source of the glad tidings.

In order to reach and bless us, He gave fourth His son, Jesus Christ our Lord. On the cross, and long before we came on the scene, there took place that transaction between God and His Son, which we find is to our advantage. There, every question was taken up affecting the glory of God and the state of ruined man; taken up between God and Christ. When all had been wrought out for God's glory, God set His seal on the value of what He had done by raising Jesus, and giving Him the highest place of exaltation at His right hand. May we fix our attention upon the Lord Jesus Christ with the understanding that GOD has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

With regard to our entrance into, and our progressive understanding of these "great things", may it not be illustrated by Columbus starting out from Spain with a new world before him. He only dreamed of it in his imagination at first, but it was there for him to discover and explore. When a soul gets his first assurance that God has blessing for him through Christ, he starts out to explore the extent of it, and soon finds something of the immensity of that New World infinitely more wonderful than the one which Columbus discovered: and the centre of which is Jesus Christ the Lord. In Romans 4 v.24 we see that this transaction of nearly two thousand years ago between God and Christ has a very great import for us. "But for us also, to whom it (righteousness) shall be imputed if we believed on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead".

Now, you notice, we believe on Him. On whom? Surely GOD, of whom it is said that He raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. We now understand that by means of that transaction on Calvary He has dealt with the whole question of our guilt. Hence, just as Christ was delivered in view of our offences, so He was raised again in view of our justification. God announces, by Christ's resurrection, His clearance from all those sins with which He charged Himself for us. Further, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Thus we see and understand the import of what took place between God and Christ in this work of redemption.

Look at Romans 5 v.1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". We are brought into the presence of this God, to find that each matter that once stood against us, with all its resultant fear, shame, and judgment, has been dealt with in righteousness through our Lord Jesus Christ; so that we have peace with God. All unrest and disquiet is gone, and the conscience, though enlightened as to the sin, is at rest because it has been dealt with by God Himself.

So also in Chapter 5 v.11, the crowning point to which the believer is led in that section, "not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ". All that we learn - of our standing in grace, our hope of God's glory, our place in God's ways, our enjoyment by the Spirit of His love, our assured benefit from Christ's risen life as well as from His death - leads up to the conclusion that this wondrous God is very blessed in Himself, a fact which we are now fitted to enjoy because through Christ we have received the reconcillation needed.

But not only has God settled the question of guilt; He has also taken up that of race.

There is a popular idea that if only you can improve the conditions of the human race - eliminate war, conquer disease, settle disputes by arbitration, provide a living wage, and secure better housing, etc. - the race will turn out alright. When, however, we learn the depth and extent of our sin as before God, we find that that kind of talk will not do. The race is away from God. It is radically wrong, from fallen Adam, its head, downwards. If there is to be any true blessing according to God, there must be a new race, and another Head. To this new Head and this new race we are introduced in the latter part of Chapter 5. We have in Chapter 5 v.15: "For if through the offence of (the) one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by ONE MAN, JESUS CHRIST, hath abounded

unto the many.” God has disconnected our link with Adam by the death of Jesus as representing us, and now in His own mind connects us with Christ risen as the new Head, who secures all His race in grace, righteousness, and life.

Let us look at Chapter 6. This takes account of us as having been under the domination of sin. We were under it as sure as the Israelites were under the domination of Pharaoh in Egypt. But by this great transaction the whole state into which sin had brought us, the whole order of life in which sin was our master, has been removed in the death of Jesus before God. To us also who believe in Him sin’s domination is over. We are set free from sin’s masterful control (verses 18-22) and are become servants to God. The wages of sin is death truly and we have so learned it; but we have equally learnt that the gift of GOD is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (v.21).

There is much help for us in seeing how God has wrought for our advantage in His Son. At this point we might be tempted to think that all will now be plain sailing, and that now we shall always be all that we ought to be and do all that we ought to do. Surely, if set free from sin’s jurisdiction (we might argue), and brought under the influence and love of Christ (Chapter 7 vv.1-4), we should never do wrong and nevermore have a wrong thought.

Alas! what honest christian is there, who does not find that the very opposite is the case? Oh! what a heart-rending discovery it is to realise the workings of evil within. If in the distress occasioned by it we think that perhaps more earnest striving after holiness or power will alter it, a little more reading of the Bible early or late, a deeper earnestness in prayer, our every effort disappoints us. With every good intention, we yet find that we have no power to improve the flesh. It becomes in this way a veritable misery to us. It is not that we fear judgment for our sin; that matter is settled once for all. But we long for experimental freedom from the working of sin within, that we may pursue without distraction the will of God; yet here is this sinful propensity within. The renewed mind is toward God and God’s will; the flesh, the carnal nature within me, if ever it moves, moves only for sin. Is it not here that the deeply exercised believer may be heard to cry, in effect, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” (Romans 7 v.24).

And what then do you find? Look at verse 25: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”. We need not despairingly set about to improve the flesh, but thankfully see God’s judgment upon it; owning that by our own trying experience with it, we have been brought to the point where we see that nothing but ending it under God’s judgment would meet the case (Romans 8 v.3). Then, freed from the vain effort to improve self, and thankful to see it ended under judgment, we turn evermore to be occupied with Christ who is God’s delight. Here our hearts get that enjoyment of liberty and relationship and support which we never could get by looking within.

Finally (as to the gospel) look at the end of chapter 8. We have necessities, weakness, suffering and opposition. But through all we have the support of the Spirit within, and the intercession of Christ on high, and the blessing and enjoyment of God’s love. In verse 38, 39 we read: “I am persuaded that . . . (nothing) shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in

Christ Jesus our Lord.” Oh! the pleasure and affection with which God regards Christ Jesus our Lord! Yet in all that affection I stand associated with Him as one who has believed His glad tidings concerning Jesus Christ our Lord.

* * *

But now in the Epistle to the Colossians Paul is found to be minister not of the gospel only, but also of the assembly. The first fourteen verses seem to be preliminary, so that hearts may be set perfectly in rest before the Father, with every question settled, and all pressure provided for. We are seen to be brought out from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love, We find ourselves under the sway of the One who, as Son, dwells in His Father’s love, object of the Father’s affection in whom He finds ineffable delight. This is ‘a kingdom where love is supreme. Are we not thus prepared to find something of the dignity and glory of His Person? Notice how the apostle is inspired to go on.

We read: “Who is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature. For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him.” Greek students tell us that in that verse there are three prepositions bearing upon this creating of all things. The last one is “for Him” - that we can understand a little. We, and indeed the whole creation, are not made as a man might turn out something by machinery, but really to serve the purpose of glorifying Him who made us. Then also “by Him” in the end of the verse, we can somewhat grasp. He was the active agent in the work of creation. But the first line seems to me to be deeply mysterious. It was not merely that He was agent in their creation (it may perhaps be rendered “in Him”) but it implies that “He was the One whose intrinsic power characterised the creation. The creation, all creation, the all things, including thrones, etc., were so created as to bear - each detail in its measure - some impress of His glory. If we knew the language of the heavens above our heads, or the earth beneath our feet as He created them, every form of life, every atom, every colour, every shape, every sound, and every authority, would utter some impress of the wisdom and glory of Christ. He created it in such a fashion that there is no part of it but interprets, and brings into evidence, something of His majesty, His wisdom, His power. “From the worlds creation the invisible things of Him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity” (Romans 1 v.20, N.T.).

Then: “He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” By the study of this little planet we are supposed to know something of the law of gravitation, by which it, and the other planets, are held in relation to the central sun; orbits within orbits, wheels within wheels. So also our sun, and other suns (possibly with attendant systems of their own), may all revolve around some great central point which astronomers have tried in vain to discover. But the simple christian is after all wiser than the astronomers, for he can say, “By Him all things hang together. He is the central Pivot, the glorious Person in whom every part of the universe is concentrated, and He holds everything for God. He is also the central authority, and He has put the stamp of His glory upon every subordinate authority

Further, as with every atom of the material creation, so also has He put the impress of His glory upon the resurrection world. He is the Firstborn from the dead. He carries, and supports the whole of the resurrection system, and from Him everything emanates.

Now may God help us to understand a little at least, as to the ministry of the assembly. The assembly is formed for a very peculiar purpose in connection with this risen and glorified Man. It is formed to be a transcript down here, and, at the present time, of all that Christ is up yonder in glory. The day is coming when God will bring into evidence all that Christ is, and then everything will be subordinated to Him. But He is absent for the time being, hid in God; and we saints of the interval, who form the assembly, are left on earth to be the counterpart here of all that He is there. This seems to be the teaching of the Colossian Epistle. The chosen apostle Paul indicates to us, not only his own deep exercises and conflict of spirit as to it, but likewise the great desire of God that it should be known - "to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Time will not permit of the development of Colossians; but we seem to have preliminary teaching from the same apostle in the Epistles to the Corinthians as to the assembly, which prepares us for the understanding of the later Epistle. Studying Corinthians with all humility and in dependence on the Spirit of God, it will be noticed that it is addressed to the assembly of God, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints. They are assured in Chapter 1 v.9 that "God is faithful, by whom we are called to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

The saints in Corinth had certain instructions given to them regarding their constitution as in the assembly, and their practical conduct, so that they might be found in every detail of life, service, and testimony, consistent with the fellowship into which they had been called. This fellowship, into which God in His sovereignty has called every true christian, is in Chapter 10 of the epistle called "the Lord's table". It is the name given to the partnership to which by grace we belong; and there is no other partnership or fellowship to which we can rightly belong. We find it to be based upon Christ's death, the teaching as to which is developed in Chapters 1 to 11. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? That partnership is first of all connected with the death of Christ; and consistency with the import of that death is enjoined upon us in every circle in these chapters referred to. But as the Apostle proceeds with his unfolding of the truth of the assembly he indicates our further privilege of being consistent with the resurrection of Christ, and all that God has established in connection with Christ risen, and in the power of the Spirit of God (Chapters 12 to 16); and in the second epistle carries on the saints in Corinth to the value their privilege of knowing Christ in glory that they might also see their responsibility to be consistent with all that He is there too.

Reverting to the first epistle, the concern of the apostle was that they should be constant with the fellowship into which as God's assembly in Corinth they were called.

The Lord's Table is not merely a gathering. There is nothing about the assembly meeting in Chapter 10, or about the saints conduct in a meeting. It is a continuing thing. The true christian is in that partnership called the Lord's Table every day of the week; and wherever he is, at home, at business, on holiday, he is responsible to be loyal to the fellowship or partnership into which he has been called. We are, to use the human figure, all brought as partners into the business, and to see that in no way do we bring injury to the business or dishonour to the Name. If a man is not a christian he is not in the partnership set forth in this term, the Lord's Table. If we become consistant with the truth of the Lord's Table, what a clearing there is of everything that is inconsistent.

Then let me emphasize what we have in Chapter 1 v.2: "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." The Scriptures never contemplate the assembly in one place being independent of the assembly in another place. The instruction of the epistle is not addressed to one locality only, but to every place where saints are found. Hence the man that had to be put away in Chapter 5 would be recognised as put away, not in Corinth only, but also in Cenchrea, and Philippi, and Jerusalem. The fellowship of the Lord's Table may be locally expressed, but the principles which obtain in it apply equally to every locality where it is found. All else is disorder and confusion, and is inconsistent with the terms of the partnership.

Finally, I have to say that the ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the assembly proceed from the One Head, Christ in glory. We can see the wisdom of God in selecting the Apostle Paul as the one single vessel in which both ministries were to be exhibited and worked out into result. Had Paul been the minister of assembly truth, and Peter the minister of evangelical truth, we might have followed the one to the neglect of the other. Divine wisdom set both ministries in one vessel that we might learn never to pursue the one line to the detriment of the other.

In the teaching of Christ's interests in the assembly, and in urging christians everywhere to be consistent with the truth of it let us not fail to exercise our hearts in full fellowship with the outgoings of the heart of God in the gospel.

And in presenting the truth let us do it in the spirit of holy affection. If we associate bitterness of spirit with the truth we teach, we prejudice the truth in the soul of each one of our hearers. And the truth is too valuable for us to lose or let slip. May God exercise every soul to properly value the truth of Christ with every faculty of his soul.

Then, as to preaching the gospel, let us not forget that we have fallen upon very difficult days. May God make every one of us careful that we preach the gospel under clean conditions. If we preach a clean gospel free from every association which would mar the testimony, or that would be inconsistent with the terms of that fellowship to which we have been called, we should doubtless find the exercised saints of God in harmony with this testimony almost to a man.

MAN DWELLING IN GOD AND GOD IN MAN

The simplicity of scripture is part of its greatness. Though we be christians, years upon years of our lives may be deprived of pleasure and joy in God's things because we fail to take God's Word as it stands.

* * *

There is, some say, one unique feature about the English language which makes it shine above all languages known on earth. It possesses the word "Home". Nothing compares with it in any other tongue. All that it spells to us of affection and interest must be told in other countries in explanations and circumlocutions galore. The one word is enough for an Anglo-Saxon. The Epistle of John speaks again and again of our dwelling in God, and of God dwelling in us. In speaking of either of these great verities we have to confess how wonderful they are.

Romans 5 tells us about boasting in God (the "boast" in God, verse 11 is the same word in verses 2 and 3, see New Trans:). That was full of blessing when first we realized it.

But dwelling in God is the finding of a home in Him. It is not merely the discovery of, and our delight in, all that He is and has done for us in Christ.

But may we find home in God?

And may God find home in us?

We ask these questions. We are made in the asking to feel how stupendous they are. Is there any light on their meaning? Is there any possibility of their realization?

First, as to their meaning, there can be no doubt that their glorious realization is seen in Christ. Even in His life on earth God was in Him, and He in God.

All the history of Adam and his race proved that there was no correspondence, no compatability, between God and man. The divergence became more and more manifest as time rolled on, till it culminated in the rejection of God's Son, the disclosure of the state of fallen man's heart and nature. How, then, could God dwell in men, or they in Him?

In Christ, in incarnation, there was a new beginning. The mysterious birth of our Lord was required, (we guard, with all awe, the deep mystery of Christ's Eternal Being as the Son. But we speak above of His coming into the world as Man) and was given as a sign that God was setting aside the old and customary order, and was commencing a new order, in which everyone derived birth immediately from Him; not by the intermediate agency of man. Until Christ died and rose again He remained alone (John 12 v.24); now others have come to be associated with Him, He is the Firstborn among many brethren, though, be it noted ever peerless in this new order; for He inaugurated it in virtue of what He is in Himself, in His own Person and right. We come into what He inaugurated by the gift of grace alone, and by the power of God acting in grace.

But we are the children of God, born of God; not born in successive generations from one another as in our natural life, but each one born immediately and directly of God.

Now in Christ there was perfect compatability, absolute correspondence, between God and Man. God dwelt in Him; who can gainsay it? He dwelt in God; who can deny it? The ever-blessed God found in that Holy Person a temple, a residence, a home, in which every part was congenial to His nature, and corresponded with His will. There was not a single element which could cause friction or produce disparity. The motives of His life, the "reins", the "inwards" were of a sweet savour to Him. His ways were ever pleasing in His sight. At no point was there ever the turning even of the eyes in another direction. The garden of Gethsemane, which showed how real were the sorrows He was facing, only brought out the sweetest and most holy correspondence to the Father's will. We say it reverently: God found His home there in Him.

But, He dwelt in God. Is this a little more difficult to understand? Do we not more readily comprehend what comes down to us (though all is wonderful), than what rises up to God? How perfect was the Lord Jesus! Holy from His birth, intrinsically so, He had nothing in common with the pursuits of this sinful world. There was no home for Jesus here. His affections and all the activities of His holy Being were trained on what suited God. His meat was to do His will. As Man, He fixed His heart Godward, and found in God all that man could desire. In Him the devil was given the lie. The enemy of our race had subtly infused into the first man's mind that he could do better for himself if he shook off allegiance to the Deity, and acted contrary to God. In Jesus we see the new order of Man, the woman's seed, destroying the works of the devil. His heart, with all its affections so infinitely pure; His mind - all steadfast and true, found unceasing delight in God. He reposed there, He retired there, His communion lay there, in God.

The storm raged about Him; earth and hell were all let loose upon Him; and the wrath of God against sin was borne by Him at Golgotha for our sakes; but when all was finished, this Holy One said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit". He retired even in the hour of dying into His dwelling place with God. We say, and we say rightly, that His body was laid in the grave, and that His spirit entered Hades; but in the language of our present theme He went "home". He commended His spirit into the Father's hands. It is not His divesting Himself of humanity, and retiring into simple Deity (as some wrongly assert) at the time of His death - for He is servant for ever. (see Exodus 21.) - but of the spot, which He esteemed "home" when His work was done.

He is risen now. The temple was raised again in three days, as He said. In heaven seated and crowned, the heart of God reposes in Him, finds complacency in Him. For ever and for ever does the fulness of the Godhead dwell in Him bodily. Moreover, as Man He is sufficient to fill out every wish of the heart of God. All of loveliness is there, all perfection, all grace, all faithfulness, all stability and durability of God. In Him the nature of God finds its counterpart for complacency, as well as its display for blessing to the creature.

On His part, too, Jesus, the ever blessed Man, lives unto God. His Holy nature as

Man finds its untold, unmeasured bliss in God. He knows God infinitely, perfectly, with all the powers of the One risen from the dead. He is in the condition and the place where God has designed to put man in the closest relationship and privilege, and in the full light of all that God is. From that nearest and dearest place - may we not reverently say - the heart of Jesus rises up in ever happy and holy delight in God. "Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance" (Acts 2 v.28.) "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee". (Hebrews 2 v.12).

How unrestrained must be the intercourse of Jesus with God! How perfectly intelligent is our risen Lord in all the ways of God! He proved them in the depths when He went into death; He knows them in the heights where He is in the glory. He knows all the nature of God, and all His attributes; and is there in the deepest enjoyment of them all. To every part of God's glory there is the response in the nature of the Man Christ Jesus; so that our blessed Lord, looking as Man Godwards, find everything in Him to yield complacency and delight, and the most intimate worship. We tremblingly touch a chord on this great Organ, and our hearts are thrilled by the heavenly harmony that springs out at the touch.

And now as to the realization of this ourselves. The Epistle of John presents God dwelling in us, and our dwelling in God, not as the attainment of the few, but as the ordinary (some people call it "normal") state of the child of God. We are born of God, and are God's children. We can approach God in the filial confidence and affection of those whom grace has given the right to be in His presence. We have been given His Spirit also, who trains us in obedience and love, and who conducts our souls in perfect liberty into the holy scenes where God is. By His power there is conferred upon us the capacity to understand God, even as in Christ we have a life which is able to enjoy Him. We are qualified in the way of nature, life, relationship, intelligence, to find our home in God.

Then again, we are not left to speculate as to the Deity, according to all the surmises and reasonings of the human mind. God is fully revealed, and is in the light, that is, He has been so adequately displayed in Jesus that nothing remains concealed of His nature or attributes. At the same time, and in the very circumstances in which He was fully revealed, all my sins have been covered, never to rise against me any more; my sinful life has been ended under condemnation in the death of Jesus for me; and by God's gift and God's grace I live through Him. My guilty history is so dealt with - my state - my sins that my coming into God's presence is not to be reminded of anything which could make me uneasy or ill at ease there. For ever no! The heart draws near to God in happy and holy freedom; we have access by one Spirit to the Father; and there are set at ease - made at home in God. All that the renewed heart sees in God makes it feel more and more at home. Holiness - my home. Righteousness - my home. Light - my home. All that He is - my home, my joy, my boast, my ecstasy. I dwell in God.

Do not ask me to change this home for another. Do not tell me I shall be better off if I make more of this present world. I have found in God my treasure, my fame, my life, my recreation, my repose, my all. What a God He is!

Do not direct me to a crucifix. Do not assure me that the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, or the cinematograph pictures are necessary to make religion palatable, or the faith of God effectual. Oh, tell me more of God - my God; already well

known in the love of Jesus.

But still there remains the other wonder. It does not require a great stretch of imagination to see that God must be the Fountain of true delight; and that the redeemed one is put where he may find delight in Him. But it is almost incredible, almost beyond belief, that God should so speak of dwelling in us? It is not merely that He has saved us, and put His power into us, transforming our lives, and that He then uses us in His service. But it is His feeling at home in us; finding nought to prevent it, but everything congenial to Him in the children He has begotten, in the saints He has saved and delivered and blessed. If we on our side can, and do, commit ourselves unreservedly to Him in the sense of being at home with the One we know, He on His side has qualified us through His Son to be subjects of His complacent delight. He is able to view our inbred sin as though it were not, through the death of Jesus; and our sins though numberless, are all blotted out, gone, by the blood. Our life in Adam, in which God found no complacency, is judged and gone for faith in Christ's death; we are not what we once were, but are new creatures in Christ by grace, children of God. Our tastes are according to God; we love what He loves; we hate what He hates. Above all we have unbounded confidence in Jesus our Lord, and love to think of Him, speak of Him, worship Him, serve Him. The Holy Spirit finds it His congenial task to set more and more of His glories and love before us.

I have no doubt there would be greater results from this if it were uninterruptedly enjoyed. We should bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. We should love because He first loved us. We should meet our brother's need; we should not be misled by the many false prophets in the world. We should have confidence towards God in praying, and should have the petitions which we ask of Him. Many results there would be but it is the thing itself one would like to know more of.

The words of Scripture are simple. The privilege they set before us is most precious and profound. May we know more of dwelling in God, and of God dwelling in us.

GLORIES

A MEDITATION ON JOHN 17

Enjoying the privilege one evening of a family reading with friends, the seventeenth chapter of John which we briefly considered lingered in my mind on retiring to rest; and FIVE GLORIES OF CHRIST which are named therein opened out with freshness.

In the hope that some readers may share in this meditation, and even follow up the study for themselves, I note them down.

* * *

The position of the 17th chapter of John's Gospel is well known.

In the twelfth chapter Jesus closed His public ministry among the Jews, for it says, "He did hide Himself from them" (verse 36); "they believed not on Him" (verse 37). The mass became judicially hardened, as had been prophesied by Isaiah, and although many among the leading men were persuaded of the Divinity of His mission, all their influence on the mass was nullified because (for fear of the Pharisees) they would not confess Him. Christ's words at the end of the chapter state the issue; even if judgment did not fall there and then, the rejection of Him and His words meant judgment at "the last day."

Hence from chapter 13. He occupies Himself alone with His disciples down to the end of chapter 16, showing them definitely what His going away meant, and indicating how intimacy with Him in the place He was to reach, would be maintained, though they remained on earth; and how they would be supported here in peace, fruitfulness, and testimony during His absence.

This service having been rendered to His beloved followers His prayer to His Father is recorded for us in chapter 17, and was spoken in their hearing that they might have His joy fulfilled in themselves (verse 13). They were permitted to hear His intercourse with the Father that they might know the place they had in His own, and in His Father's affections, and have the joy that flows from it. Into this intimacy and joy we — even we — are introduced, in verse 20. I commend the examination of these verses to my readers, familiar though they be.

In this prayer we find the five glories referred to. The first and earliest glory in point of time is that mentioned in verse 5. It is clear that this is

DIVINE AND ETERNAL GLORY;

"the glory that I had with Thee before the world was." He addressed the Father in all the calmness of known intimacy, and as having calculated the bearing of His words (for He prayed as being conscious of His listeners, and with a view to their joy); and went back in His prayer to that eternity of companionship with Him in glory, antecedent to the creation of temporal and material things. We are earlier here than Gen. 1. 1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. There was an Antecedent to the heavens and the earth; and that Antecedent is Elohim -- God. In the third verse of that chapter in Genesis, which commences the written revelation of the Godhead, the Spirit of God is the first of Divine Persons to be separately referred to. But in John 17, 5, the Father and the Son are shown to our adoring hearts in the glory proper to Divine Persons, and as antecedent to the world's creation, Themselves uncreate; thus completing our view of the Eternal Triune God.

JOHN 1. 1 The Word

Three great Scriptures suggest themselves in this marvellous revelation of the glory of the Lord Jesus. The first chapter of John is a contrast to Genesis 1. and goes back into an immeasurable eternity. Evidently there is vast difference between "in the beginning God created" and "in the beginning was". The former relates the beginning of that which did begin; the latter refers to Him Who existed and had being when everything else that began did begin. The Word never did begin to be

the Word; in Him we see eternity of being, though our finite minds stagger in the contemplation of it. The Word was distinguishable in His own Personality from eternity, for He was with God. He is not the same as the Father, nor is He the same as the Holy Spirit. He was not an emanation from the Father; He did not become the Word by either creation, or evolution, or birth, in some remote point of time in the past eternity; otherwise He Himself would have had beginning which is a contradiction of what is stated in the first three verses. For at the time of the beginning of anything that began, He was. The glory He had with the Father before the world was, was Divine and eternal glory: The word was God.

But as the Word in the Godhead, He is the One in whom Godhead ever could and did express itself. For illustration we may say with reverence that the Father remains invisible, and the Spirit (though assuming at times emblematical forms as dove or flames, and typified by oil), does not take personal form. But the Son became man, the Word became flesh. In what way the Godhead expressed Itself to Itself when Godhead alone existed and nothing else was, we cannot of course say. No one knows the Son but the Father. It cannot surely grieve us that there are glories deeper and grander in the Son uncreate than we created beings can comprehend. But in whatever way and at whatever time God gave expression to Himself, the eternal Word was that Person in the Godhead in Whom He did it.

Hence, for example, when the Godhead willed to express Itself in creation, all things were created by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. It may be difficult to utter the meaning of that wonderful verse; but we may glean from it that everything, from highest to lowest and from greatest to the least, came from the hand of the Word, and was intended to be, each thing in its measure, an expression of the glory of the invisible God. (See Rom. 1. 19. 20; so also Ps. 19. 1) Not merely that it was created, nor merely that it was created by the agency of the Son (both of which remain true), but that when it was so brought into being it took its form and function as part of a vast creation intended to give expression to the eternal power and Godhead of its Creator. It is thus possible to find in nature — in its laws, its forms, its colours, its minerals, its forces — illustrations without end of Divine realities. Material things themselves are not the great ultimate reality, but they serve as vehicles to convey intelligent creatures the great Reality that lies behind them. And that Reality is God Himself.

Thus also, as in creation, so in providence, in incarnation, in redemption, in resurrection, and in glory, and in the coming days of rule and government, as well as in final and eternal judgement or blessing, Christ is the One in whom God is ever pleased to express Himself.

* * *

A second great Scripture which refers to this glory of Jesus is the 1st of Hebrews.

HEB. 1 The Son

The dignity of the Son appears to be the theme of the writer, along with the grandeur of everything He has introduced and established. We have substance in

having Christ. Type and shadow, illustration and prophecy, had existed before: partial disclosures of the thoughts and will of God, each suitable for its time and place of utterance. But in the end God has spoken in His Son, who in the fulness of intelligence, power and dignity has completely revealed Him; and by focussing in Himself the fulfilment of every type and shadow, has rendered all the former system of ritual and law not only unnecessary, but weak and unprofitable (chap. 7. 18).

But all this hinges on the dignity of the Son: He is greater than angels (chaps. 1 and 2), than Moses (chap. 3), than Joshua (chap. 4), than Aaron (chap. 5), than Abraham, or the Melchisedec who blessed Abraham, or the Levitical priests who were in Abraham's loins when the less was blessed of the greater (chap. 7).

It is not only that God says of the Son, "Let all the angels of God worship Him", or that He contrasts the honour of Moses, who was faithful as a servant in all God's house, with that of Christ, who as Son is over God's house; but in the second verse of the 1st chapter He reminds us that as Son He was antecedent to all the ages, and that in all the ordering and formation of successive ages He was the Agent by whom God has introduced or will introduce them. So that in knowing Christ we are in living contact with One whose dignities and glories as Son in the eternal Godhead were before all ages; we are, in fact, carried back to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, however, it is not so much the unfolding of the Father's grace and love (which is John's theme) as the establishment of a new system of nearness and approach to God, the very antithesis of that which had gone before in the old tabernacle system of distance and imperfection. The latter was but provisional: that which Christ the Son has brought in is eternal. As Son, He had not beginning any more than as the Word; His Sonship is a glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He was competent in the dignity and glory and greatness of His Person to hold counsel with the Father as to doing His will and bringing about a system of blessing in which God could find eternal pleasure, having His people in happy and holy nearness to Himself. (see chap. 10).

COLOSS. 1. Son of the Father's love

A third Scripture also brings Him before us, connected with His glory with the Father before the world was. It is Colossians 1. Christians are said to be translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love (verse 13). The very thought of "kingdom" brings in the ideas of sway. We are not saved to be lawless, of course, but to come under the sway of the Son. Everything is regulated from the full height of the Sonship glory of Jesus. He it is who is supreme in this realm, and over our lives as the lives of those brought into it. But behind all His authority and dignity is His Father's love; He is the Son of the Father's love.

Greatness of itself might be cold, formal, official. Greatness in this case is connected with warmth, and the sweetest warmth of all — that of holy love. The Father loves the Son; and as fruit of an affection which designs the greatest pleasure and honour for Him, brings us into a realm where He — as Son of that love — can exercise His blissful sway over us, body, soul and spirit.

The greatest influence in the world is not that of matter, nor even of mind; it is that of love, the love of God. The Son is that wondrous Being in Whom the Father's love doth rest; He is in every way competent to be the Object of it, Whose dignity and moral loveliness mark Him off beyond every other in the Father's eyes. He is, moreover, the One in Whom responsive love delights God's heart, Who loves His Father as His Father loves Him, and Who is competent and resourceful for God's will as He is worthy for God's affection.

It is He Who is God's accredited Representative, Who adequately presents Him to all the vast creation. Invisible as God must be in His infinite and essential Godhead, we are no losers thereby, for all that God is, is brought into vision in Christ. He is God's image. The living Christ, alive as He is in resurrection today, is the veritable image of God. He is representative of Him in moral glory and fulness; and also in the way of direction and authority. Other authorities and powers there are, but all are derivative from and subordinate to Him; they have a place in the ordering of creation, but only as created by Him and for Him; they only subsist as subsidiary to Him, having their spheres appointed at His will, and all their character of rule and resources of supply being in Him.

The created "all things" in the which they serve, and the form and character of their service and authority, and the measure of their power, are all amenable to His law; He is supreme among them all, Firstborn of all creation, because He created all. He is the Former of all things; however far back they may be dated in time, be it perhaps millions of years. He is before them all; and in Him they all hang together. We are carried back before the times of all authorities and powers, lordships and principalities, and find one great Figure, outstanding and glorious, the Son of the Father's love. We admit that disorder and even enmity has come into the time-scene; but He it is who is entrusted by the Godhead to bring about deliverance from Satan's power, and to reconcile things to Himself. But before the disorder came in, whether in the visible or invisible world, He it was Who, in Godhead glory, was Subject of His Father's eternal affection. He it was Who, being designated Head of all things in manhood, created all the spheres of authority in which His supreme sway and infinite Godhead fulness might be (and in the redeemed creation will be) fully realized. He will impart His own character to the whole creation, and bring everything into subjection to, and accord with, God in heaven and in earth.

But the reason of it all is, the greatness of His Person before any of these things existed at all. In Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell; every element in Godhead fulness and majesty, all of authority and power, all of character and activity, all of wisdom and knowledge, all of God's very nature of love, is set forth and made available for man.

When the disciples were relieved in the storm by the stilling of wind and wave, they were impelled to exclaim, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the waves do obey Him?" The more we ponder His words, "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was," the more our hearts must be subdued in worship and praise before Him.

He is the Word in Whom God is ever expressed; He is the Son eternal, Whose dignity is greater than that of any created being, and who according to Divine

counsel was to become Man and bring many sons in nearness and relationship to glory; He is the Former of all things, who, being eternal Object of His Father's love, and God's Representative, could be Creator and Upholder and then Reconciler of all things and all authorities to God.

* * *

The second glory in order in John 17 we must describe as

MORAL GLORY

It is found in verse 4, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." This does not mean a physical or material display of glory or splendour such as would affect the human senses. There are qualities of character which draw the heart and affect the mind more than the pomp of outward display. A Nero may command the display of colour and the pageantry compatible with the might of Rome, while the heart that has sense of moral worth may feel the utmost contempt and repugnance for the very Caesar who is the centre of it all. To find moral perfection, to become intimate with some One who is everything that can be desired by the most perfect and happy beings, to know a Person in whom rectitude and affection, mercy and happiness, are fully realized, and not only are made available for others, but are reproductive of their own kind in those who are attached to Him, - this is far beyond outward show.

* * *

Seen in His Life

In the Lord Jesus as Man here was expressed all the moral character of God. Everything that can rightly be connected with the thought of God is found in its perfection in Jesus. Do we speak of holiness? He was holy in His very conception and birth, and holy in life and ways. Do we speak of mercy? When did the appeal for mercy fall unheeded or unanswered on His ears? Of truth? Of righteousness? Of tenderness? Of humility? Of obedience? Of faithfulness? Of confidence in God? Of authority? Of power? Of wisdom? Of love? All these things are seen in Jesus. Not some goodness or obedience, not some mercy or humility, but these very things themselves in their essence, in their essential perfection.

The renewed mind never reaches to the end of His perfection as though it had a limit; far as we may travel in our thought along the line of any one grace, there yet appears depths unfathomed and heights unclimbed; the story may ever be told, but never be fully told.

His language is simple, the incidents in His life story are but few in number as recorded, a hundred and twenty pages or thereabouts are all that Divine wisdom has deemed necessary for the four-times-told gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; yet apostles and prophets, saints and servants have been digging in those mines for nigh two thousand years; and the marvel with all is that, though we know enough to fill our hearts with unfeigned and adoring worship, there remains enough to fill them for all eternity.

It is not only that the greatest apostle to the Gentiles almost plaintively, certainly yearningly, cries, "That I may KNOW him" (Phil, 3. 10), but the greatest apostle to the Jews voices the same interminable and illimitable delight: "Whom having not seen ye LOVE; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory". Knowing and loving — these sum up the twofold testimony to the matchless worth of the Lord Jesus Christ. To know Him is to love Him; to love Him is to want to know Him more. We would like to be in His company for His own sake. Such was the spell that acted in the fishermen and others who followed Him in days of old; such is the attraction that draws us still.

* * *

Seen in His Death

But what shall we say when we come on to the close of His life here? What of His cross and shame? What of His suffering and death? What of His obedience to God's will, and His devotion to God's good pleasure? What of His love?

How can we speak of His bearing God's judgment upon sin? Of His being made sin on the cross? Of His facing death as our penalty, and as the awful limit of Satan's power? For in all these ways have His perfections been tested and proved. It is not only that in Jesus we reach One who is perfect, but One who has been tested in circumstances whose character had never been experienced before. The best of other men break down somewhere. Jesus nowhere. The heart in its craving for a perfect object reaches finality and enjoys unchanging rest in the Son of God, while the conscience has its abiding rest in His atoning work.

Here, indeed, God is glorified: glorified not only in the exhibition of every moral beauty in perfection's highest height, but in respect of all His holy claims as to sin and the sinner. For this word of the Lord Jesus. "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do," must surely have been uttered anticipatively in view of His death. It covered all His life down to the moment He uttered it: this we know. But the whole of the section, chaps. 13-17, anticipates His going out of the world to the Father, and speaks of the conditions which would obtain when He had thus gone. At the close of chap. 16, as a summary of His own pathway, and looking over to its assured close. He says, "I have overcome the world." As surely as this includes the final hours of testing, so surely does "I have glorified Thee on the earth" look on to and include His death where His journey on the earth was ended.

* * *

The Father Glorified

But after all the point in our Lord's words which we are considering is "I have glorified THEE". It is tantamount to saying, "I have made Thee glorious" In this Gospel in particular we have the Lord bringing to light in His own life and testimony who and what His Father is. So that while we behold the Son in His own unique perfection and glory, and are necessarily drawn to Him, we are to convey

our thought and affection likewise to the Father. Christ remains, but the Father is so identical with Him in character, in grace, in love, that he that has seen Him has seen the Father. Such is His own word to Philip in chap. 14.

Is Jesus superlatively attractive and admirable in our eyes as enlightened by grace? Such also is the Father who sent Him. Though the Father be separately invisible, yet we know Him, know Him lovingly, know Him reverently, know Him adoringly. He has been fully revealed in Christ, and every feature in His character, every attribute of His Being, every depth in His nature, awakens responsive affection and worship in our hearts. Every ray in this glory speaks its own wonderfully blessed language to us; we are thankful that ever we were created to know such a God. The grace that recovered us from our sin has brought us so near that the Father's house has become the home of our hearts, the Father's love the delight of our spirits. What we have said of the Son we must say of Him also; to know the Father is to love Him; to love Him is to want to know Him more. To be morally like Him becomes the hope, as one day it will be the realized portion, of every soul that has learned the Father in the Son.

* * *

The third glory in John 17 is

DIVINE GLORY IN RESURRECTION

It is conveyed in the Lord's request in verse 5; "glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." May we humbly seek out the meaning of this wonderful demand. For it was uttered by a lowly Man; by One often referred to as Jesus of Nazareth. It was said when to all intents and purposes He was scornfully rejected by all that stood as having religious authority, and despised by such as stood high in the world's social scale. He was ere long to be the sport of soldiery, the jest of passers by, the Object of mockery to chief priests and elders, the deserted Leader of His most intimate disciples. He was about to be condemned as a blasphemer and a malefactor by the Jew, and executed as a rebel by the Gentile. Above all He was about to become the Victim for sin, the Target for all God's infinite judgment upon it, a Curse under the Law which His people had broken. He was to touch that awful thing which His spirit revolted from, to have contact with that sin of man which necessitated banishment and wrath. He was shortly to taste death, to be buried in His grave.

Yet placing Himself anticipatively on the other side of it all, in view of a work finished and His God glorified on earth, He — He, the Despised and Rejected of men — looks up into His Father's heaven, its blue purity taking its character from the purer blue of His own Divine and heavenly glory, and says — as Man — "Glorify Thou Me with the glory I had with Thee before the world was." Quickening out of death, and resurrection were implied; for in departing out of the world and going to the Father, He went by way of death; and to glorify a Person who has died, in any real way, He must be raised from the dead. But these words of Jesus are not a mere request for honours; He demands now as a Man that glory which eternally belonged to Him as the Son with the Father. If Jesus were not eternally Divine, never was blasphemy or falsehood so awful; if He be the eternal Son, never was truth so

splendid, or glory so grand. Come from above,

The Son of God who dwelt in light
Unreached by mortal eye,
Came forth as Man the foe to fight
And won the victory.

As Man, and for men, He died; as Man He arose. A hundred insistent voices on the pages of inspired Scripture proclaim it. The Corinthians questioned the reality of His resurrection only to be countered by the mighty phalanx of witnesses marshalled in Cor. 15. The Jews bribed the Roman soldiers to hush up this tremendous reversal of their rejection of their Messiah; but the real personal resurrection of Jesus was the irrepressible testimony of all the apostles of the Lord. The Lord Himself showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs, and in His own inimitable way chided those hearts who thought the facts were too good to be true. He says in Rev. 1. 18, "I am the Living One; and I became dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore."

He it is of Whom it is written, "by Man came the resurrection from the dead." He is the Son of Man to Whom and not to angels, not to spirits, is put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak. It is because He is "of one" with His brethren and they with Him, that He can be Captain of our salvation and High Priest of His people. Not less true is His Manhood today than His Deity from eternity.

But let us examine the bearing of this unparalleled demand of the Lord. There is a verse in the 13th chapter of this gospel of John which throws light upon it. When Judas had left the company in the supper chamber, "Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him."

Thus we have three things:—

1. God glorified in the Son of Man.
2. The Son of Man glorified in God.
3. The Son of Man straightway glorified.

The first we have been considering. The second is what we are considering now. The third shews us that the glory with which God would respond to the work of the Son of Man would be immediate not delayed.

Man Glorified in God

We find it more easy to understand the thought of God glorified in Man, because it comes down to us-ward; it brings the glory of God within our view as fully represented and expressed in a Man among men, though it require opened eyes to see it. But — Man glorified in God — a Man — Son from all eternity indeed, yet as Man — passing from circumstances of lowliness, humiliation, desertion, weakness, death, in this world, up to the Godhead glory, and the Father's throne — this is

marvel among marvels where all is marvellous. It is always wondrous that God, infinite and eternal, Love, Light, and Spirit should be able to express Himself absolutely and adequately within the compass of Manhood; it is — dare we say it? — almost more wondrous still that a Man, this unique Man, should require Godhead position and glory to adequately express Himself. The fact is there. If any reader should ask the writer to explain himself further, he would have to reverently stand and own, “No one knows the Son but the Father.”

Yet at least we may study what is revealed. Jesus is not only crowned with honour, but crowned with glory, and that, too, in the presence of God. He is not only advanced above everything and beyond every created being that possesses a derived and God-given name (Phil, 2) but to Him as Man will that homage be rendered which God has sworn shall be rendered to Himself; for “in the Name of Jesus shall every knee bow,” while “every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” To Him as Man has been accorded that place which belongs exclusively to Deity, for He is seated at the right hand of God. He has overcome, and is seated in His Father’s throne. No one else will ever sit there. Marvellous advantages accrue to us, but the position is His alone, He is unique.

Four times over in Hebrews is this position affirmed. “When He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High” (chap. 1. 3). “[He] is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (chap. 8. 1). “He sat down on the right hand of God” (chapter 10. 12). “[He] is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (chap. 12. 2).

Shall we for a moment consider the first of these four passages? The height — dizzy height for our minds — to which the Son laid claim and which He re-took at the end of His service here, is obviously that of Divine, God-head glory. It is that of which He had said, “glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” There are assuredly thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, in the earth, or in the intervening heavens, which are quite enough to make our head dizzy by their height or grandeur; but this Person has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. He is above and beyond them all, and they are all made subject to Him. They were created, each to represent God in the way of authority in the limited spheres of His appointment, whether in the heavens or the earth; He, Who is indeed their Creator, yet become Man, has passed as Man to the height supreme from which He descended; Man in resurrection glorified in God.

The language of Heb. 1 is extraordinary, especially if we read it in English as it is stated in the Greek. “When He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become by so much better than the angels as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they.” This latter clause “He hath inherited a more excellent name than they,” is gloriously explained in verses 2 and 3, and covers His eternal Deity; while the first clause, “Having become by so much [or “Taking a place by so much”] better than the angels,” shows the resumption by Him as Man of His position in Godhead glory, after the accomplishment of that work which He wrought as Man when He made purification for sins. Never did He cease to be Son even here; never will He cease to be Man there; but the Son is the Man, Christ Jesus, and He has carried Manhood into Godhead. That part of His glory is incommunicable, it is His alone. Yet its light and influence thrill our hearts,

for this is the One who bore our sins and made purification for them.

Where, then, are the sins? Gone. Gone for ever. Whose sins are gone? Mine, and those of every believer, thank God. The presence of Jesus there in the unstainable purity of the throne, and in the unsullied splendour of the Divine glory is proof enough that our sin, our sins, are gone from God's sight, gone by His atonement and death for them.

* * *

The fourth glory in John 17 is

REDEMPTION GLORY

A Glory in which we share.

"The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." This is different from the preceding. It is not this time such glory resumed as He had with the Father before the world was, in which others could have no part. Yet all that His love could share with us He imparts; and He deliberately speaks of this to the Father in the hearing of His disciples that they might have His joy fulfilled in themselves. The things of which He speaks were a joy to Him.

"That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs";

found its pleasure in this largesse of grace. He could not leave them ignorant of this grand destiny of bliss. Though He had drawn them around Him as those given to Him of the Father, and would love them to the end, yet their dowry of blessing was to be won for them by His sweat and passion, by His conflict and death. It was to be shared by them when He was past the cross and in resurrection; for again let us remember that this prayer places Him in spirit on the further side of His death.

Until He died He abode alone; alone, of His own order; grand in moral glory, but alone. To have others, His like, He must as the Corn of Wheat go into the ground and die. He must first suffer, and then enter into His glory, if that glory were to be shared by them. First the walk and work in humiliation alone; then the resurrection answer, with His loved ones brought on to the same platform of triumph and blessing with Himself. First the cross, and then the crown; first the shame, and then the splendour. First the Son in Manhood, meeting all the claim of God in respect of sinful men, abandoned, in loneliness, working out redemption, His life taken, His blood shed; then the Son in resurrection, alive as Man to die no more, Head of a new race, Pattern of a new order, able to speak to His brethren of His place and relationship as theirs too now. (John 20).

For though Deity is incommunicable, yet Christ became Man, that through death and resurrection He might share all that can be shared by Man with believing men. He assured them of their place with Him in the same favour before His God and theirs, and of their part in the same relationship as Son in manhood before His Father and theirs. He as the risen One, the last Adam, breathed on His disciples,

thus imparting life of His new order, life characterized as Holy Spirit (See John 20, 17 and 22). Relationship, favour, and life – these are given to His loved ones, these are given to us.

That these things are all to be displayed in glory is true, blessedly true. But these things are true now, and are to be enjoyed by us in the power of the Holy Spirit. They come out in the way of character even here. The world knows us not because it knew Him not. Now are we children of God. Yet we are “incognito” here, and what we shall be is not yet manifested. The people of the world see us and do not know who we are. When He shall be manifested publicly, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. And they shall see too, and the world will know that the Father sent the Son, and has loved us as He loved Jesus.

We are made participants in the love which the Father has for the risen Son, and in the glory which is the fruit of His work for men. Life eternal, victory over death, deliverance out of the world of Satan’s power, the heavenly calling and inheritance, relationship with the Father, association with Christ as His brethren, the Father’s name and heart made known, and His counsels revealed to us – all this has been opened out and set forth to us in Christ in resurrection; it is glory that has been given to Him as Man (Who is Son) in resurrection, and He has given it to us.

And He has given, too, the Holy Ghost that all these things may become consciously and intelligently ours. We are not, as paupers, begging our way from door to door of this world’s charity, nor asking its smiles and favours or applause; we crave not its company nor its pursuits; we are sons of God, to walk with satisfied hearts in dignity and intelligence here, with power and wisdom unknown to men, holy dispensers of heaven’s rich bounty to the need around. He has given largely, freely; we, too, freely give. Such were the disciples, such are we who through their word believe on Him.

We have access to the Father, we are in the light of what He is doing in the midst of this world’s confusion, we have the key to its present miseries, we know the solution to its problems. The rejection of Christ has postponed its deliverance; its peace awaits His return. The whole creation will only be delivered from its bondage at the time of the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8. 19). But when He does appear in glory these will appear with Him as sharers of it all. We co-suffer; we shall be co-glorified. For the glory the Father has given Him, He has given us. We do not want glory while He is absent; we shall have it, share it with Him, when He comes. Only even now we have the Spirit of the Glory. (1 Pet. 4, 14).

* * *

The fifth glory in John 17 is

GLORY OF PRE-EMINENCE

“Father, I will that they also whom Thou has given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou has given Me.” This glory is referred to in the same terms as the preceding. That is, it is the glory that is given Him. It is not in this case “the glory which I had with Thee before the foundation of the world.”

It is glory given to Him as Man subsequent to His path and service on earth, and hence is expressive of the Father's satisfaction and pleasure in all that HE was and did here.

Given, yet to be beheld.

As to the position won in resurrection we share it as we have seen; as to the glories which will be displayed as the fruit of His redemptive work, we participate in these by His own deed of gift. But He Who gives is greater than His gift; and in His personal greatness will always be the Object of wonder and adoration even among those who partake of His favours and love. All the New Testament bears witness to this.

As to relationship, favour and life, these are shared by the risen Jesus with His believing people. Yet even in stating it He says, "My Father and your Father." He is distinct in His personal greatness even in passing on this relationship to them. He says again, "My God and your God." It is favour conferred in association with Himself; yet our hearts gladly accord to Him the homage of His leadership and His distinctive desert of that favour. For we are recipients; He shares it with us truly, but it is He Who is the Giver.

He says, "Receive ye Holy Spirit," and thus communicates of His risen life to His beloved ones; but it is He Who is the last Adam, and not they.

We if asleep through Jesus shall be raised from the dead as Scripture abundantly proves; but He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father — a distinction indeed which it is our privilege to regard and appreciate.

We shall be like Him, for God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son; yet even so He will be the firstborn among many brethren.

He is the Lord and the Christ, and not we.

He has made us priests, but He is the High Priest.

He has made us kings, but He is the King of kings.

We are God's house, He is Son over God's house.

He brings us into gladness beyond all telling; yet He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

Among all dignities and authorities He shall have the pre-eminence.

He is given to be Head over all things to the church, though grace unites the church to Him in that glorious position.

God will head up all things in the Christ, both which are in heaven and in earth.

The angels, ten thousands times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, with elders and living creatures, will say with loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour and glory and blessing.

These are glories we shall behold; and we shall be placed near enough to Him, even where He is, to be able to see them. Wondrously as we are loved, blessedly as we are favoured, we shall every one of us own that, even in regard of those positions in which we are nearest to Him, He has a superlative excellence all His own.

The Father's love which had no beginning will secure this transcendent glory for Jesus, even amidst glories which are bestowed upon Him as resultant from His suffering and rejection here. And that same love will secure us to be intelligent spectators of this glory of pre-eminence. We — the many sons brought to glory shall own Him the Captain of our salvation; even as He will say, "Behold, I, and the children Thou hast given Me." Who is there that does not here appreciate the grace that associates us with Him, yet the unique glory which is His alone for us to contemplate it?

"Lord of glory, we adore Thee,
Christ of God ascended high;
Heart and soul, we bow before Thee,
Glorious now beyond the sky."

May the reader and the writer learn to love and praise Him more!

"THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS"

(2 Timothy ii. 1-10)

The Assembly of God, - the company of people called out between the day of Pentecost and the moment when Christ will call us home - has been gathered out for the express purpose that, during the season of Christ's rejection, we should be here in exact correspondence with all that Christ is, and this not merely individually as saved sinners, but as an Assembly in which can be set forth certain glories and certain functions which no individual could possibly set forth.

Now as to Christ in glory, it is not that He is a different Person from what He was on earth, but that all He was on earth has passed through death and resurrection and so into glory, and is seen there in Him. In connection with this I would like to refer to the gospels of which we have four, and each one represents the Lord Jesus Christ in certain graces. Just as this epistle begins with the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, I would take the gospel of John first. In this gospel we have certain things set out in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Man on the earth, of great importance. We get first of all life seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, life that is entirely according to God. Secondly, I think we get relationship; we get the Son down here as a man but in relationship with His Father. Thirdly we get communion, uninterrupted, holy, blessed, intimate, wondrous communion.

In this gospel He is presented down here as that Eternal Life which was with the Father. It is a life of a distinct kind from that which the ordinary natural man lives born of Adam. The Lord Jesus truly came down in the condition of flesh and blood, but He lived here after a new manner of life, a life that had its home with the Father; as it says, that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. Then relationship. Although when people looked at the Lord Jesus Christ they might speak of Him as Jesus of Nazareth, and somewhat contemptuously speak of His lowly birth, His apparent lineage, relations, and His trade as a carpenter, yet nevertheless, that lowly, gracious, perfect, blessed Man was found here as Son in relationship with the Father. He could look up into His Father's presence and commune with His Father in all the joy and blessedness of that known relationship. To sum up briefly, we have these three things presented in the gospel of John, life, relationship, and the deepest communion with the Father.

Now remember that that Person has gone on high and all these things are found in Him there, are they not? As He says in the end of the gospel, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Then He breathed upon them and communicated His life to them here, saying, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

We are left here then to represent Christ in these three things. In the Christian Assembly there should be seen this grace which was in Christ Jesus; there should be seen in us a character of life different from the character of life that you see in men in the world; there should be seen in us all the blessedness of our relationship with God as Father, and there should be with us all the depth of communion that nothing can disturb. I think that when we begin to consider for a moment something of the grace that is set forth in Christ Jesus we can see that it opens out tremendous possibilities for us.

Now come to the third gospel, the gospel of Luke. In this gospel we have set forth all that God is in grace, in a Man here on earth; so that as you watch the footsteps of the Lord Jesus and His ways, and listen to His ministry in the gospel of Luke you are brought into contact with the resources of God in grace for every condition of man; and that too, even if the earth closes up, opens heaven to us. Now that is a second thing connected with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and one of the things that has to be worked out in the Assembly of God on the earth; that is that the Assembly of God should be down here through grace enabled to represent the thoughts and the love and the grace of God working in a world such as this is. The Assembly of God while it is most wonderful and has connected with it the most wonderful truths, is yet to be down here the great exponent of the heart of God in a world such as this is. And therefore you cannot dissociate the thought of the Assembly from the gospel. It could not possibly be.

Then you take the second gospel, the gospel of Mark. I think we have the thought brought out there in wondrous detail of the Lord Jesus as the Servant of God, and as Servant not only doing the works of God and meeting the necessities of men, but also speaking the word of God, so that the words that He spake were really God's testimony to men. And you find that all His works commanded the appreciation of God, and at the same time He was tireless and swift in His meeting of every need that came across His Path. And the Assembly of God is formed also

to be the great exponent of Christ, the transcript of Christ with regard to this love of service. You might say it is summed up in Peter's address in Acts X., when He says, "He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." Now we who are Christians are united by the Holy Ghost to Christ, and we are so formed and constituted that we should be down here in this world reproducing what Christ is, as He was presented in the gospel of Mark, going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. I was hearing the complaint of one dear sister who said that the Christians she knew seemed to think nothing more than about going to meetings and never seemed to have any time to do any good works. I wonder if we are like that? How many poor do you care for and visit? In what way do you exhibit this activity of the love and grace of Christ in the presence of all the needs around? And remember that He whom you love and whom you are left on this earth to represent went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. So while we value meetings and value opportunities of getting together, and we need to abide by the truth and learn it and to be in the power and good of it, let us see that it is found in our affection. As it works in us it will produce in us likeness to Christ that we shall be representatives of Him here, and there will be with all our learning the doing of those good works that are in correspondence with it, and we shall love to be connected with the testimony of God, the truth of God's word, and the ministry that God has to send out whether to His professed people or to the world.

And then, lastly in the gospel of Matthew, I think we find the Lord Jesus Christ coming down as the great Administrator of the will of God, to the carrying out of His promises and purposes with regard to the earth, and to administer that which God has put under His control. Now the Assembly of God is intended to be down here, a company of people in the world under the rule of Christ, in which all the functions and all the administration should be ordered according to His will, and where the will of man is ruled out.

Now I have only given a little summary, but, brief as it is, I think it will suit these words, "THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS?" and you will see it opens out tremendous possibilities, and it shows that when we speak of the Assembly of God, after all, we know very little about it. As long as we break bread, we say, we are in fellowship; we seem to be quite content with coming to meetings and going to meetings, and we attend the breaking of bread and the gospel meetings, and perhaps one in ten at any rate attend the prayer meetings; and perhaps two in ten attend the Bible reading, and we think we are getting along very well; and as long as we do not have a regular good fall out it is alright. O! but is that Christianity? You remember that we are left here so that although the world cannot see Christ it should be able to look at us and understand what kind of a Person He is. Is there not a whole field of acquisition before us? Is there not everything to learn? And it is not only a question of information and getting our minds instructed, but the Holy Spirit working into our souls every line of the truth, and bringing it out in power.

We have been looking at that word, "The grace that is in Christ Jesus" as it is presented in the four gospels. Now the Apostle says to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." These things should not be mere theories, but every line of the truth ought to be wrought in living power in our souls. What is the secret of having the truth of God in real power in our souls? An honoured brother once

said, "I think the secret of having the truth in power may be said to be this, That every line, every bit of the truth that we learn should be accompanied by a corresponding self-judgment in our own souls . . . Paul, the moment he got the light of Christ's glory shining in upon his soul, was broken down and bowed himself in the dust in self-judgment before Him; for three days and three nights he neither ate nor drank. And the result was that the truth of the glory of Christ acquired such a place in his soul that when he got on to his feet he straightway preached in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God."

Now it seems to me that being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus involves this, that with regard to every part of the truth which we learn from God there must be the getting into the presence of God in connection with it and judging ourselves as deeply as we know how in the light of the truth that God has made known to us, otherwise you are likely to lose its force. It is not that the thing becomes untrue, but so far as you are concerned, you, who might be the vessel of it and the exponent of it, lose the force of it because when you learned it you never learned it with the corresponding self-judgment. How what does that mean? If I see that God has Christ before Him and His intention is to reproduce Christ in us down here, what does it mean but the setting aside of all that I am, and of all that man is, and all that the world can bring in, the Holy Spirit just displacing everything by Christ. So that if you see anything in connection with Christ and you wish for it to have its real power in your soul, get before the Lord with that bit of truth which you have learned, and judge yourselves in the light of it. Make room for Christ, for you find the opposite in yourselves, and in your associations, or in things connected with you. Judge yourselves; allow the light of that truth to shine in upon your soul and judge yourselves in the light of it, so that the truth may become a living power and force in your life. I do not know anything that more discourages me, humanly speaking, than to see people coming fifty-two Sundays in the year, and as many week-day nights to hear addresses, and never budge an inch, never getting on in their souls. You come year after year and find them just where they were. And why? Just for that very reason they have fallen into the habit of listening to the truth and never allowing the spirit of self-judgment to accompany the hearing of it.

Then, the apostle says, "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Now it seems to me that the apostle recognises that the mass of Christians were giving up the truth, but he recalls Timothy to what he had heard from himself. We have these things in the Epistles; but, he says, to Timothy, "These things you have heard of me." Now if Timothy through exercise of soul became strong in the grace that was in Christ Jesus, and in his own life, and own way, was brought under the power of the truth, he was to commit these same things to faithful men. That is, I suppose, the apostle in a way expects that these faithful men would be distinguishable among the general unfaithfulness. But Timothy was to seek them out, and getting into their company and into exercise with them, he was to speak of these things together with them so that they might become suited vessels to carry it on. You often feel that, speaking of the rank and file, that the very things we ought to be most familiar with we can hardly speak about. We have to speak of elementary things, and it is very nice to speak about elementary things when you meet a simple child to try and help him at the point where you find him. If he is not clear about the forgiveness of sins, well, try to help him. If he is not clear about

peace with God, try to help him. If he has not yet learned the seventh of Romans, go patiently over it with him; get it deeper into your own soul while helping him, but help according as to how you find him. But how seldom you really find saints of God who are eager to learn the deeper truths of Christ and God's purpose in connection with Him. And therefore you are greatly limited and do not even have time to speak about these things; but wherever you find a faithful man, it is your privilege and mine, to share with him what we can of all that we have learned.

"The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." If you are getting into exercise as to the proper truths of the gospel and as to the deeper truths of the Assembly of God, wherever you find an open ear, and a heart that appreciates these things with you, share together what you are learning about the Lord. Make sure it is what we have heard of Paul among many witnesses; we have it all recorded here in the Word, but what you are learning of Christ share with your brother, and in that way you are preparing some who in their turn will be able to teach others also. I think that we cannot rely upon the continuation of gift in the way in which we have known it in past years. We are all conscious how that in past years there have been outstanding men, there have been those whom we have recognised as getting a distinct impression from the Lord, and they have preached the truth and been in the exercise and power of it, and they have brought the truth before us in such a way that we recognise their message from the Lord. But they have passed and their places are not filled, and we are left very very weak, we are left where we have the truth but we have not these gifts, but we are weak, and we are made conscious of this. Now supposing we had no longer these eminent and special gifts and we were left in our weakness does that mean we can no longer get into touch with the truth that is in Christ Jesus? Certainly not. We have it here, and we have the Holy Ghost given to us, but if we are to pass it on there must be this communication, as it says here, "The things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Now there are three things in the following verses that I would like to refer to. You will notice in the fourth verse you have the warrior spoken of; in the fifth verse what you might call the wrestler; and in the sixth verse; the worker. The warrior, the wrestler, and the worker: these are the three ways in which the Christian is called to stand in these days.

With regard to the warrior, we read, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." It seems as though there must be an undivided heart for Christ if we are going to stand in these difficult days. The warrior - the soldier - is a man who is called at the bidding of his king and country to put those things first that relate to the king's honour, and the affairs of life have to be relegated to the rear. He is a man chosen to be a soldier, and in his capacity of soldier his one business is to please him who hath called him to be a soldier. Now you are in that position in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, seeing the battle-field, and knowing all the power of the enemy, and the difficulties among His own people, has called you to be a soldier. One of the first things we have to watch is the way in which the affairs of life absorb our attention to the exclusion of the Lord's interest. Whatever shape the Lord's interest may take in your life, and whatever service you

are to render, be on your guard that the affairs of life do not occupy such a place in your mind that they shut out the very claims of Christ. It is very difficult: the state of affairs in the world is such that we feel the distraction of these things, the uncertainties of employment, the difficulties of trade and business, and all the things that are pending in the social and political life; all these things tend to drift into the mind like a sand-drift blown by the wind, and to extinguish all the keenness of our devotedness to Christ. I would ask you whether this may not be the secret in your case of a great deal of indifference to the Lord's interests? Is it not that there has come in such a crowding of duties, such a pressure, that you can hardly find time to discover what the Lord's will is with regard to you, and when difficulties come in you are non-plussed, not having the habit of referring to the Lord and having His will? The result is you are liable to be carried about by that influence and the other influence, because you have not time to get into exercise yourself.

The second thing is the wrestler. It says, "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." That is, there are certain rules of the ring, and if you are going to strive for the masteries, if you are going into special games you must make yourself acquainted with the rules of the games, for if you transgress you may be ruled out, disqualified. In connection with the prize we are looking for it is of the greatest importance that we should make ourselves familiar with every desire of the Lord's heart, and with all these rules which He has given us to walk by. I might ask you, do you read the Word systematically? Do you read only certain portions that you are fond of and rather fancy?

Our first verse reads, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." As far as I can understand, in this epistle we have seven things that are said to be "IN CHRIST JESUS", beginning with the promise of life in the first chapter. Seven things, seem to suggest the idea of a circumference within which it is safe for the Christian to walk in the midst of all the corruption, and that "IN CHRIST JESUS" involves our knowing all that is included and all that is shut out. "IN CHRIST JESUS" - you cannot bring in anything that is of Adam, you cannot bring in anything of your own will, or of man's organization, or of man's resources. "IN CHRIST JESUS" shuts it all out. And what we are to be strong in is "THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS." That is the circumference within which it is safe for us to walk. Well if I do not know what it includes obviously I shall be at fault; a difficulty will come in and I shall be distracted, and will not know where to look; or I may strive unlawfully in my earnestness, and when putting forth my strength I may do it in some way the word of God condemns, and as far as playing the game is concerned I am disqualified.

Well, may God give you to strive according to the illustration, "Striving lawfully for the mastery;" but see that you strive lawfully; that you know what the rules of the game are. Supposing that you were, for instance, to say, "I want to see everybody converted," and you were to set yourself out to preach the gospel and see the whole world converted. Oh how you would set to work with tremendous energy! But have you studied the rules of the game? Is this exactly what is set forth in the mind of God for the present time? Supposing you say, "Well now, I want to win souls, and I want to see them saved," and you adopt some of the expedients that are very popular today. Well, I wonder if you have studied the circumference, what

“IN CHRIST JESUS” means, and have you given a thought to what is consistent with that word “IN CHRIST JESUS?” A great many of those methods are brought in with the best of intentions but are they according to the rules of the game? Is it striving lawfully or unlawfully? God give us to test ourselves.

Then the third thing is in the sixth verse, which you require to alter a little, for the true translation is, “The husbandman must labour before partaking of the fruits.” (N.Tn). The idea is that before the partaking of the fruit there must be the labour, there must be the toil. And I think that any amount of toil is worth while in connection with the interests of Christ, because, “Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” If you do strive according to the rules and do your service according to the mind of the Lord, shutting out your own thought and will, and man’s ways and methods, and do it in the power of the Holy Spirit, and consistently with the Spirit that is in Christ Jesus, there will be certainly the working and the toiling, and the praying and the tears, but your work IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD. There will be the answer. Turn to that passage in 1 Corinthians 15. You may apparently be defeated, your work may seem to disappear, your scholars that you have loved and prayed for may be scattered, and you may think, “Well it has all been labour in vain.” But look at verse 58, in that resurrection chapter in which God shows that everything that goes into the grave will have to come up out of it. The apostle says, “Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” It makes it as plain as possible to me. I have only to see that my labour is in the Lord. I have only to study what the Lord’s will is, and to do my work, of whatever kind it is IN THE LORD, and as sure as God’s work is true, that work will reappear, nothing will be lost.

“Your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” You visit a sick man; before you go get into touch with your Lord and then visit him, and just be in His hand, and what He gives you to say, say it and commend it to Him. Do you think that the Lord is ever going to forget that visit? Perhaps there did not seem much result. Perhaps you were not well received. Perhaps it all seemed to be in vain. But in so far as your visit was in the Lord you will see that visit again in glory. I do not know in what shape the answer will be, you will have your Lord’s approval. You go to your Sunday School class, and have the boys or the girls, as the case may be, and you pray and seek in every way to shut out all that is merely superficial and sentimental or emotional, and you seek to bring Christ before their souls, praying that God will teach the young Christians and save the unconverted. Do you think that your service falls to the ground? Do you think that it is simply done and forgotten, and there is no more of it? In so far as your labour is in the Lord you will see that again. There is not a word spoken in the Lord, a thing done in the Lord, at home or abroad, but you will find God’s answer in resurrection. And so it says here the labourer will be “partaker of the fruits”. You will get the fruit, but be content, if God so will it, to go labouring on; only see to it that your labour is in the Lord.

In connection with your labour, read verse 8, “Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my glad tidings” (N.Tn). The very Master whom you wish to serve and whose graces you wish to represent on earth, was One who toiled and laboured and wept. And Oh! how He pleaded

with Israel again and again! Was it not He that said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Did He not say, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." Did not the Lord feel it? Yet He says, "My judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God" (Isa.49.4). That work which, in His lifetime, seemed to have been all in vain was found in resurrection to be of such a character that it will fill the whole universe with blessing. "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead." Remember that though you may labour in your lifetime, and may say, "Well, somehow or other, I have not been allowed to see much result of my labour", if your labour has been in the Lord, you shall, as sure as God's word is true, see the fruit in the resurrection day. God is faithful to His word. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Psl.126.6). And so with regard to all that we may think to be breaking up on every side, study what your Lord's will is, and see to it that your life and testimony and service and everything are IN THE LORD, and you will certainly be partakers of the fruits.

The apostle adds, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." May God give us to learn more of the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and seek to be consistent with it. "Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Find faithful men if you can and communicate these things one to the other. Even though you do not get the mass, go on with everything you can learn of Christ Jesus, of the grace set forth in Him, and go on too with your faithful testimony as the warrior, wrestler and worker, studying what is consistent with Christ Jesus, keeping within the circumference. And be assured of this that nothing that is wrought here by the Holy Spirit for the Lord will ever disappear. Only set the Lord before you, get into exercise as to His will, and do it in all humility; but with this confidence that as sure as God's word stands for ever, and is settled in heaven, you will see the results in resurrection. AMEN.

CHRIST THE HEAD OF EVERY MAN.

(Romans v.15; 1 Corinthians xi. 3).

I suggest the subject of the Headship of Christ for our consideration. Before speaking directly of it, I may say, it has seemed to me, that our ideas of the gospel are very contracted. In our contact with people needing the gospel, we think if we can only get them "over the line", that is all that is our present business. But really the gospel is very comprehensive. The facts that lie at the basis of the gospel are of course simple yet grand: how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; that He was buried, and was raised again the third day according to the Scriptures; then was seen first of all by several on earth, and finally by one who saw Him in heavenly glory. When we come to the explanation of the facts as to the gospel, the epistle to the Romans is the orderly exposition of their meaning. There we have first the explanation of the state in which the gospel finds men; and then of how that state was met, and of the new state that has been brought about by the grace of God. Now I am not going to take that up, but I want to show that in the

gospel we get the basis laid in the soul of the believer for all that comes afterwards.

First, turn to the last chapter of Romans, verse 25:- "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel". You are reminded, as those who have received the gospel, that God has power to establish you according to the gospel; so that every part of it should be wrought livingly into your souls; that you might indeed know the deliverance which is spoken of, and which has been wrought for you; and have a practical, powerful, entrance into all the blessing of which it speaks.

Then the Apostle goes on to say:- "According to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But is now made manifest." You see that the gospel, when it lays hold of you, and is wrought into your souls, prepares you for the understanding of "the mystery." That is what lies behind the gospel; that which was in the mind of God in providing the gospel. It is really therefore a basis laid in your soul for the intelligence of all the mystery of which God speaks.

Turn back to the 14th chapter. You will observe that we are working backwards through the epistle, just to notice some of the things, the foundation of which is laid in our souls by this faith in Christ. In chapter 14, verse 17, we read, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." We have been brought under the sway of God, in contrast to the dominion of sin. You are under God's will, you are under the sway of God in grace. the kingdom of God is set up in your soul. I suppose any Christian understands that. When he is saved and put under the will of God, this that is begun in his soul is but the forecast of something that is going to be established in a world-wide way by and by. When the kingdom of God is outwardly and fully manifested, and Christ has come as God's King over the whole earth, there will be three great marks which everybody can recognise. In that coming kingdom, everyone knows it will be a righteous rule, all wrongs will be righted, and the reign of that wonderful King will be a righteous reign. Then the second mark of that kingdom will be peace. That we can all understand I think. The nations will not learn war any more, no longer will there be international strife, no longer class war, but the will of God will be dominant; and in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, it will be absolute Autocracy, linked with absolute justice, a thing that has never been known on earth yet; and the effect of righteousness will be peace, and then joy. The ransomed of Zion will return with songs to Zion, and everlasting joy will be upon their heads, and the sounds of sorrow will be hushed. These are the three great marks of the coming kingdom of God, which will then be universal. But the Holy Ghost dwelling in you sets up the rule of God in your heart, and these three marks are exemplified in the Christian now. The christian under the rule of Christ is a righteous man, (speaking of him characteristically, and in so far as he is subject to the will of God), he is a peaceful man, and a happy man. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink", it does not consist in your being a vegetarian, or anything of that nature, but the Holy Ghost brings you under the sway of God in grace, making you righteous and peaceful. (you are not a disturber of the peace), and happy. The gospel lays the foundation in your soul for the kingdom of God. Yet while the kingdom of God is referred to, the doctrine of it in all its immensity is not developed.

Now look at the 12th chapter, verse 4:- "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. "Here we are introduced to "One Body". Those who have believed the gospel are one body in Christ, organically joined together. It is not a matter of agreement, it is not that you say, we will join one body; it is not that so many different gatherings are federated together to form one body; it is not that the gatherings of Christians are individual members of the body of Christ, and that the whole body comprises all the gatherings; but it is speaking to every Christian as being a member of the body of Christ. The fact is stated; the basis is laid in your soul, for the understanding of the doctrine when it is unfolded; but it is not unfolded here.

Now let us go a little further back. "The mystery" is referred to in another way in the 11th chapter, verse 25:- "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." You find that God instructs us even in this primary epistle as to the order of His ways. All Israel will be saved; they will all be brought into national blessing; but what God is doing at the present time is to visit the nations to take out a people for His Name. He does not want us to be ignorant about this, that what God is doing at the present time is a special work. He has postponed the kingdom in its outward manifest form, postponed the blessing of Israel, but this does not mean to say He has forgotten it. Everyone that is saved at this present time is brought into a new circle of blessing.

Now turn to the 8th chapter, verses 28 to 30. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified them He also glorified." In the gospel there is a basis laid in the soul for the fulfilment of the purpose of God. The first time in this gospel epistle that "purpose" is mentioned is in that verse:- "Who are called according to His purpose."

You may be quite a young Christian, you may not understand these things. But grasp this, that when God laid hold of you, He had a purpose in it, and it is that you should be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. It involves Sonship for us; and in order that we may have the enjoyment of Sonship even now, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son, the spirit of Sonship; whereby we cry 'Abba Father.' We get the forecast of it, the foundation is laid in your soul for the understanding of the purpose of God, a very wonderful thing. You notice it says, having begun the work, He sees it right through, it is as good as done, because that which God has purposed, will infallibly be fulfilled.

Now look at the 7th chapter and verses 1 to 4. There we read:- "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband, as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free

from that law; so that she is no adultress, though she is married to another man. Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." We may not see the full depth of it, but I think you can see this; it would not be a legal thing for you to leave the law if you were under the law, you are bound to that husband; but having died in that wherein we were held, having come under the benefit and gain of grace, we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead. That is to say, being delivered by the death of Christ from the law, we have a right to love Christ, to be wholly for Christ. "That we should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead." You have, beloved, a right in heavenly courts, to be truly for Christ, loving Him, even as a wife who is a true woman loves her husband. So the foundation is laid in your soul for union with Christ. This is individual in the 7th of Romans, but you see the foundation is laid, not merely a love of gratitude, but a love of attachment to Christ. This foundation prepares you for the unfolding of the mystery when the church as a whole is united.

I come now to the 5th chapter and verse 15, and to the subject of the Headship of Christ, the foundation for which is laid in the believer's soul, but the doctrine of which is not unfolded in this Epistle. We can see in these chapters of Romans from the 3rd onward, how that God in sovereign grace and through the death of Christ is the source of all blessing; but that it has been so wrought, and so seen in Christ, and the administration of it is so put into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all the blessing that we have by believing the gospel is administered through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You will notice how one blessing after another is presented as it has been wrought out in Christ Jesus. Take for example the 3rd chapter. We have a summing up of our guilty estate in the 23rd verse, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We might well despair as far as we ourselves are concerned. But, speaking to believers, the apostle at once says, we are "Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The Name - the title - "Christ Jesus" is applied to our Lord Jesus Christ where He is now; as though to say, Look at Him. There has been wrought out a redemption the full power of which is seen in Christ Jesus. It is not even directing us to look to Jesus on the cross, because He is not there; and it is not that we are to look at Him buried, He is not in the grave; nor are we limited to the thought of redemption in Him only as risen from the dead. He is up there in glory; and the full expression of the redemption, - the benefits of which He confers upon us, as those that believe the gospel - is seen in Christ Jesus; it is all set out in Him. He was charged with the sins on the cross, but He is not charged with them now, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God". But through whom, and on what ground? "Through our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the great Administrator of all these favours of God. But not only so, we have a standing in Christ, and we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of promise in the 5th chapter. God thus draws our attention and fixes our minds on this glorified Person to whom we are indebted.

Now, says the apostle, the foundation having been laid in your soul, and your heart having understood something of what a God God is, I will introduce you to the

subject of the Headship of this Person. From the 12th Verse of the 5th chapter he goes on to speak of it. He says, "As by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." So in verse 15, "Through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." The sin in which we formerly were found, the sins which we had committed, and the death and the condemnation that were the result of these things, are all traced up to the sin of one man - Adam - our head. The head of this race of men, was the one who fell through sin; and so death has passed on all for all have sinned. In the 3rd chapter where you have these three words "All have sinned," it sums up our guilt. But in the 5th chapter the same three words are given us in the 12th verse, to sum up our state. The old state was that we were of a sinful nature under a sinful head, and condemned in that state. But now that we have come into connection with Christ, we are translated from all that was connected with Adam; we are free of condemnation, have a new life, and are now in Christ.

The word Headship is not exactly mentioned, but may God grant that each Christian may very definitely see how God now takes account of him as under the headship of Christ, just as he was formerly under the headship of Adam. All connection with Adam has been judicially annulled by Christ's death for the believer, but Christ's death for him followed by His resurrection has involved for him the beginning of a new order of man altogether; as we have seen, our redemption is in Christ Jesus. We see that in Him God has found a Man in whom He can rest, on Whom we find the love of God eternally resting; and that the love of God rests upon us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Look at the 17th verse, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one." There are three things in that verse - grace, righteousness, and life. We must understand that it is a very great thing for us, to be connected with Christ and to be under Christ's headship, in God's reckoning. In the way that God takes account of us, we have been transferred from Adam to Christ. In this epistle to the Romans the foundation is laid for the understanding of it in the soul of everyone who believes the gospel; he knows he is linked to Christ in risen life. He is in the Head, he is linked with the Head, and he partakes with the Head in all His wonderful position of grace, righteousness and life. At the end of the chapter it tells us in verse 20 "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Grace, righteousness, and life.

Now pass on to the 11th chapter of 1st Corinthians, where the subject is carried a step further. There is a difference between Romans and Corinthians. The epistle to the Romans is to ground us in the truth of the gospel as the Apostle says, "To establish you according to my gospel." So that very largely it applies to every believer; it is for the individual believer to get established in the gospel. Now come to the epistle to the Corinthians and look at the first chapter. In the second verse the apostle addresses this epistle to the assembly of God, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." He is not now addressing individuals, to respond to that gospel by which they have been individually blessed, but he is addressing them as an assembly; to all in the locality where they happened to live. Lest anybody should

say, "That applies to the Corinthians, God has not given it to us," read on. The apostle says, "To the assembly which is at Corinth, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's." It is as though he would say, It is true that the state of the assembly at Corinth is the immediate cause of my writing this epistle, and it gives me the opportunity of unfolding to them for their help what the assembly of God is in their locality; but also it is an opportunity to instruct everybody in every locality as to the constitution of the assembly; and as to its privileges and functions, the ways of carrying it on. If anybody says, "O that is Paul's teaching, and we are not bound by Paul's opinion," dear friends, it is nothing but ignorance; and that is exactly what Paul says. But if we really want to be intelligent in our relations and responsibilities as Christians, and our privileges, we need to read these epistles to the Corinthians.

Now the apostle says in the 11th chapter and the 3rd verse, "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." It is a very full verse, it opens the subject of headship in three directions. First, the head of every man is Christ. I am aware that some take that to mean that everybody all over the world is to be under the Headship of Christ, and that is true, but as the apostle is addressing himself not to the world, but to the christian assembly, the immediate application of it is clearly to every man in the Christian assembly. "The head of every man is Christ." Moreover "the head of the woman is the man." That is the second compartment into which this subject of Headship is here divided; and thirdly, "The head of Christ is God." I feel diffident as to saying very much about that, but, the fact is that the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Eternal Son, and is ever seen in His own unique relation in the Godhead, has become Man, and in taking a place as Man, He looks up in dependence and subjection to God. Even though He is exalted and we behold Him on the throne, what is He there for, if it be not for the carrying out of the purpose and counsel of God? By and by when He takes the Kingdom is it not to bring everything into subjection to the will of God? In the end when the Kingdom has run its course, as far as that form of it is concerned, and the Lord Jesus has brought Israel through every peril, He will deliver up the Kingdom to God and His Father, that God may be all in all. He takes His place as subject, as Man. We feel how proper it is, even though there is such a mystery connected with it in Christ, that man - the true Man as Christ is - should recognise it as it says here, "the Head of Christ is God." He has taken that place as Man that in Manhood He might carry out all the purpose of God.

Then "the head of the woman is the man," of course that is elaborated in the chapter. For it is important to remember that in the christian assembly God has a certain order that is suitable to Himself, and this is part of the order, that the head of the woman is the man. When assembled as a christian assembly, we know that the men remove their hats, and the women remain covered. Why? It is because of what is said here, - the head of the woman is the man. Man was made in the image of God, in His likeness, and the office of man in God's creation is that he stands in the image and glory of God, he is the head of the lower order of the creation; hence it would not do to cover up the glory of God. The man remains uncovered, but the woman was given to the man to be his help-mate. The woman is the glory of the man. So that, when coming into the presence of God, the glory of man is covered. That is the reason: may God give us to see the beauty of it; that in God's presence the

glory of man is covered, but the glory of God is uncovered.

Then we read, "I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ." What is involved in that? I do not know if it is exactly as we have it in the epistle to the Romans, that all the blessing for man is headed up in Christ. It is true that that underlies all; the fulness of God is in Christ. But is it not that when the assembly comes together, we are to look to Christ for direction, for wisdom, for support? How is the assembly to be carried on, while the Head is invisible, but nevertheless real? If everyone understands that he has immediate access to Christ, and Christ has immediate access to him, he would not be asserting his own will, or pushing himself forward, or pushing one down and another up; but everyone would be looking to Christ for direction. In the christian assembly there is not the appointing of a minister, - a man to direct or to control the service. Of course I am not speaking of ministry of the truth in the way of individual service, but of the assembly gathered in one place in recognition of Christ, as the One living, personal, active, controlling Head, directing the gathering. "The Head of every man is Christ." That puts us all in direct dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

May what we have looked at increase our exercise, and help each one, for His name's sake.

CHRIST HEAD OVER ALL THINGS

(Ephesians i.10-11, 19-23: v.22-32)

In our first address our subject was the Headship of Christ. We commented upon the fact that the gospel is a very comprehensive subject. The facts that form the basis of it are simple, connected with the death and resurrection of Christ; but the explanation of these facts occupies the whole of the Epistle to the Romans, so far as the benefit to the believer is concerned. As the book of Genesis, in the Old Testament, contains the germ of most of the Bible, so does the epistle to the Romans contain the germ of the greater part of Christianity. We noticed several subjects that seem to be hinted at in this epistle to the Romans. The Mystery; the Kingdom of God; the One Body; the Purpose of God; the Priesthood of Christ; Sonship; Union with Christ; and in the 5th chapter, the Headship of Christ. The Headship of Christ is only considered in Romans so far as it opens out that He is the Head of a new race of men. Everything was gathered up into His own Person on the cross, -the penalty, the judgment of God due to the first order of man, in respect of our guilt and state. Then He rose from the dead and became the Head of a new race; and to that new race every believer belongs. The word Head is not used in the 5th of Romans but the subject is there, - the Headship of Christ. Then we passed on to the 11th chapter of the 1st Corinthians, the epistle that deals not so much with our individual blessing, as our collective privileges and responsibilities in connection with the assembly of God. The apostle says in effect, "I am greatly concerned, I would have every one of you know "that the head of every man is Christ".

There are three things that may now occupy us, and can be easily remembered. First, the purpose of God; secondly, the Person Who is the centre of that purpose; and thirdly, the partner associated with that Person.

The first chapter of Ephesians opens out to us a very wonderful presentation of Christianity, because it conducts us beyond this present scene. There are certain things that occur in our time history; we are brought to realise our sins, and the need of a Saviour; we realise that God has provided One in the riches of His grace; we obtain redemption and the forgiveness of our sins, and we are sealed by the Spirit, but, in the first chapter of the Ephesians, we are carried outside of things here, outside of this world, outside of time, right back into eternity. We find that the blessing which we enjoy as individual believers was thought out, and purposed, and planned in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is astonishing that we should have had a place in the thoughts of God from all eternity; according as He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

In verse 3, the Apostle speaking on behalf of Christians, says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus has been here, rejected, slain, and in His death has wrought the glory of God, and for the accomplishment of His purpose; and He is now made both Lord and Christ at God's right hand. You have His full name and title here, our Lord Jesus Christ. Now God, Whom we realise to be our God and our Father, sets before us what He thinks of Christ, makes us cognizant of His enjoyment of, and delight in our Lord Jesus Christ. He takes this name and title as connected with all that He has to say to us. The Apostle in the sense of it says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." and then brings in a view of all His favour. "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." It is stupendous. Every believer is in view; you have been blessed in this way, according to the thought that our God and Father has of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is no longer addressing Himself to man as the God of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob; but, with His eyes upon this glorious Person, He seems to say, "Now I will tell you what I am prepared to do, and what I have purposed."

He goes on to speak of the nature of believers, in which they will be found when all the purposes of God are completed, when the last trace of flesh in us has been left behind. When God has carried out what He will carry out, we shall then be holy, and without blame before Him in love. "That we should be holy": when the purpose of God is completed, we shall be entirely agreeable to God in that respect, holy because He is holy. There will be no trace of defilement in us then. If we learn what we are to be in that coming day, then we learn correspondingly to regulate our conduct now. "Holy and without blame," not a single blot or flaw under His holy eye, as it says, "before Him." What a scene it will be when every saint all over the universe will be holy and without blame before Him in love. We shall be formed in the divine nature, and placed before His eye, where His love shall rest upon us with delight eternally. That refers to our nature.

Then in verse 5 we read, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself." There you find the mind of God that we should be in all the dignity and intelligence and power of Sonship. It refers, not so much to the moral nature in which we are to be formed, as to the relationship in which we stand before His face: - by Jesus Christ. It is in each case for the gratification of His own heart. We are predestinated to Sonship by Jesus Christ to Himself, in that near and holy relationship, to be enjoyed forever.

Again in verse 6, we read, "To the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He

has made us accepted in the Beloved.” “In the beloved,” what does that mean? If you can understand in any degree how much God loves this wonderful Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom He speaks here so prominently as “the Beloved?” you can see what a stupendous revelation it is to us that we are taken into favour in the Beloved. Every Christian is verily beloved of God, the love of God rests upon him, and he can be rightly designated as one of the beloved of God. But while that is true, and true of all saints equally and alike, there is One Who is pre-eminently the Beloved. You who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are said to be accepted in the Beloved. That is the power of it; it is not simply to have that acceptance in the Lord, but in the Beloved. God would stress it, that you might understand how greatly you are loved, and that you are taken into favour in the measure of love that He has for the Lord Jesus Christ,

Then, in the 7th verse he says, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Notice these two first words, “In Whom”. God has not simply given you a document saying, “Here is the forgiveness of your sins,” but, He says, “I have worked out that question in a Person. There He was with your sins upon Him, and upon Him fell all the just judgment in view of My claim in righteousness and holiness; He bore it all, and the sins that He bore were yours. They are all gone, and the very Person who bore them is risen from the dead, enthroned in glory. It is in Him you have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” That is the measure of the redemption that He has wrought out for us: the question is never to be reopened. And so He acts according to the riches of His grace. I know some people have the idea, “Yes my sins are all forgiven up to the time of my conversion; but what about the sins that I may commit after my conversion?” But from this stand-point in Ephesians, God would have you to understand that when He did take up that matter, He did not divide your life into two or three sections, - your past sins, your present sins, and your future sins; but undertook the settlement of that question according to the wealth of His grace; taking it all up at one and the same time, and settling it all in that One Person, so that every believer can say, “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.” God took into account all our history from start to finish; at that moment knowing all the sins beforehand, and dealing with them according to His own glory.

With these things in view - our future assured, and the sins question settled - we may think, what more could there be? Dear friends, there is after all a great deal more, and this I want to bring before you. Believers, whom God has so wonderfully blessed, are taken into confidence by the blessed God. They are drawn into His presence to receive the most intimate communication as to what He is doing. What is God's object? He appears to say, “I want to take you into my confidence. I have constituted you my redeemed ones, and I have given you a nature and a relationship, and an acceptance in which you can be in undisturbed possession in quiet and rest, every anxiety removed. Now, with your heart at rest, I want you to understand that My blessing and your blessing is really part of a larger plan”. The larger plan is this, He has made known to us the Mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself. It is hid from other people, but made known to the believer. Let us remember that the will of God is supreme; He counsels, and it must be accomplished. When we read of the will of God in this sense - the will of His counsel - we know that it is going to be accomplished. What is

behind it all? "His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself." What then is His good pleasure? Is it not that God is working out a wonderful scheme, headed up in Christ, in which He will be able to find eternal pleasure. When it is all brought into being, and all accomplished, God will be able to rest in His love, in supreme satisfaction, because He has brought about a system for His own pleasure. He purposed it in Himself, He has made it to depend upon His own omnipotence and omniscience: He has made it depend upon His own wisdom and power. He has brought it about, and will bring it about, for reasons of His own. Truly we can say:- "Father, Spring and Source of blessing."

What is this purpose? He is going to bring everything under one control. He has purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might head up all things in Christ. There are a great many discussions that take place amongst the nations, and amongst men, as to what is really the best form of government in a properly constituted state. Some would advise aristocracy, some would speak of autocracy, some of democracy; but what is God's good pleasure? The fact is that all these schemes of men fail, because the state of men in their fallen condition sets them one against another. Supposing you had a community where there was no authority, but all did their own wills, it would be every man against his fellow. It is all very well to talk about dividing things up equally, but anybody would know that very soon one man would want more than he had, and he would feel that he could only get it from his neighbour, and so there would be one set against the other. But God is sovereign; and the most wonderful order of things will be brought about, when there will be absolute autocracy or theocracy, combined with absolute justice and absolute consideration for every creature. The blessed God alone is capable of it, and He will vindicate His will, and He will entrust - He has entrusted - the fulfilment of it to this wonderful Person, - it is purposed to head up all things in Christ. It is God's plan to bring everything under Christ; everything will centre in Christ; He will be the great Head, the great source of authority; He will rule and order and govern according to the will of God.

Now turn to the end of the chapter, and there we read more about the Person. The Apostle prays in verse 17 of the first chapter, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of your calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead". Attention is drawn to this Person already named in the 10th verse. But He was found in death. Every power that is adverse to God had been put into movement to place Him there; all the power of Satan, all the judgment of sin, all the hatred of man, all the hidden forces of evil, had been brought to bear upon His holy Person. He had gone down into death. You can see the power that was against Christ. But while in grace He submitted to those conflicting powers, and when they had done their worst, and Christ had gone down to the very bottom, when sin had risen to its greatest height, - God raised Him from the dead. We who believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ can also trace in that death the removal of our sins and our sinful state in Adam; but we can see also all the working of the power of evil against Christ and its seeming success in putting Him in death and the grave. But then God in the might of His power raised Him from

the dead. There is a power greater than all the power of evil, greater than death, and greater than the grave, seen in God.

Then in verse 20 we read, "He set Him down at His right hand in the heavenlies" (N.T.N.). It is not only that He rose superior to the powers of evil, and triumphed over death and the grave, but God has proved the might of His power by setting the Man of His purpose, the Person Who is the centre of His plan, at His own right hand in the heavenly places. "At His own right hand" implies that in Christ God has vested all His power. The right hand signifies the strength, and the power, and the authority of God. In setting Him at His own right hand He has constituted Him the great administrator of His own authority, and His own mind, as well as His own blessing. He has set Him thus "in the heavenly places", away from this earth. The true source of power is not here, the executive that will give effect to the purpose of God is not now resident here; the Holy Ghost truly is come from the right hand of God, from Christ there, and is here provisionally; but the power that is going to set the earth right, and put the whole universe in harmony with God, comes from the right hand of God. "He set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power." They are not to be named in the same breath. Christ is supreme, above every other name, above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named. "God hath put all things under His feet," everything is subjected to Christ in the plan of God, and will be effectually put beneath Him according to God's mighty power. It may be said, "How is it that everything is not put under Christ now?" There is a reason for this. The saints, redeemed by Christ and formed into one body, the church, are the only people that have this wonderful secret communicated to them at the moment. God has made known the plan (verse 10), but He has also disclosed to us who are believers, the Person, the One destined to be both Head and Centre of His plan. I love to think that God has so far proceeded with the plan; He has already displayed the smash up of the power of evil in the cross, and He has exalted the Person Who overthrew sin and Satan, to His own right hand. You can see the Person to whom God has entrusted this high place of dignity and glory is in position, Head over all things, and all things put underneath His feet. God is not inactive; He has already seated Christ at His own right hand in heavenly places, He has exalted Him, and He has put the church into the knowledge of it. The rest of the world does not yet acknowledge it, but the redeemed ones do who form the assembly. When it says the assembly it means all Christians from the descent of the Holy Ghost to the Rapture. The whole church of God is in the secret of God as to the Person to Whom God has entrusted the fulfilment of the plan. We acknowledge Him in the meantime as Head, but for the moment we Christians are the only ones who really do so. Let us be consistent in our subjection to Him.

Then it says that the church is His body, the complement, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." In further explanation of this we may turn to the 5th chapter and there we find the unique position in which the church is placed. When the earth was first formed for man's habitation, you get an indication that God had this in His mind. After this world had been started, all free of sin, in its beauty, its productiveness, and its serviceability, man was created and specially formed according to the counsel of God. It was said, "Let us make man after our image and in our likeness." He then put man at the head of all this lower creation. After He had been constituted the head to have dominion, God brought the animals before

him. God had endowed him with such qualities that he knew exactly in what language to describe each animal; and whatever he designated each animal, that was its name. He was truly the head of this lower creation. But of all the creation of which he was head, for the moment it was just nothing but a splendid isolation, because there was not anyone with whom he could share it, to whom he could communicate this thoughts, or with whom he could enjoy the privileges that the Creator had placed upon him. He was alone in it; head, but alone. Then in His goodness God crowned the position for him. He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make him a help-meet," and He did. He gave Eve to be the partner with him in this place and scene of glory. It is so plain that we ought easily to grasp it; and yet it can only be by the Spirit of God.

Come now to the anti-type, and we find that God raised Christ from the dead, and set Him over all, - Christ personally; but is Christ to be alone? That is where the council of God comes in in regard to the church. For the church, composed as it is of all believers in this present dispensation, is to be with Him in His place of dignity and glory, - even as Eve was given to Adam - to be His partner in His greatness.

In the 5th chapter of Ephesians, we find that the model, the example, is set before us of marriage; in the 22nd verse of the 5th chapter, we read, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord." It is often commented upon that it does not say, "Wives obey your husbands" as though they were children or servants. In the 6th chapter you have "Children obey your parents" that is a question of authority, and rightly so; and then in the 5th chapter, "Servants be obedient to your masters" comes in again; but with the wives - "Submit yourselves unto your own husbands." In this chapter the husband is looked at as being the representative of the fulness and authority of God for his wife; all that Christ is to the church the husband should be to the wife. We are obliged to think of these things in a somewhat abstract way, for what husband is there amongst us but must feel how far he comes short of it. But the wife is to submit herself to her own husband as unto the Lord, finding in the husband the one who directs and leads. It is not a question of obeying exactly, but the husband regards the wife as given to him of God to be his helpmeet in the partnership; and that loving her as Christ loves the Assembly he may be the supplier of all that the wife needs; giving guidance, direction and help, in every matter; the wife meanwhile submitting herself unto her husband as unto the Lord.

Then in verse 23, we read, "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the Head of the church." Let us humbly seek to take it in. Christ is the Head, and we gladly bow before Him owning His supremacy and glory; we can say, "How rightly crowned is Jesus, Who once atonement made." Is it not wonderful that you and I, and all the redeemed of this dispensation, are to be with Christ, and to be to Christ what the wife is to the husband?

In verse 25, we read, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." It is not the individual saint that is in view, but the church; that he might sanctify and cleanse it. "That He might present it to Himself a church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing;" that it might be in every sense suitable and compatible with Himself. A true wife will always seek to enter

intelligently into the responsibilities in the midst of which her husband is placed; she will not regard herself apart from him, walking in a spirit of independence, but will freely enter into her husband's concerns; not to disown his leadership, but to be sympathetic and intelligently able to enter into all the circles of his interests. What a wonderful thing it is that we Christians should be made meet companions even for Christ. What a wonderful thought that we are to be such in the midst of all the stupendous glory that He will enjoy, able to enter into His interests, and be sympathetically and intelligently companionable to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not exactly like an earthly prince who may place his affection on a partner very much below him in station, and then have to feel how difficult it is for her to share his dignities and glories, because she is unable to look at things from the prince's point of view. God has given us the same life and nature as our risen Lord, and brought us into the same relationship as He; we are really His kinsfolk, His brethren, and can enter into the whole range of His interests. The Christian even down here is acquiring competency in view of that coming union with Him. Whatever we can learn of Christ's interests to-day let us give ourselves very heartily to them, so as to be more and more qualified to take our place intelligently in that wonderful day, when we shall be with Christ and like Him, and associated with Him; sharing His administration in all that vast scene of glory.

There are then these three things. There is first of all the Purpose or Plan of God, in chapter 1. Secondly, we have the Person Who is the centre and Head of all that Purpose. And in the 5th chapter we have the church looked at as the Partner in that wonderful position. To that church, by the grace of God, you and I belong at the present time, while we are down here. It is our privilege to study all we can learn of His love, His greatness, and His will, in order that we may be more and more intelligent and qualified to share with our Lord Jesus Christ when the day of display and glory comes.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE HEAD

(Ephesians iv. 7-16).

In our previous addresses we considered the Headship of Christ: in the first we noticed that every person who believes the gospel, has, in receiving the facts of the gospel, received also what prepares him for the understanding of every other truth. As you advance in divine things you will never be able to leave out, or to leave behind, the basic facts of the gospel. In trusting yourself to Christ in the simplest way as Saviour, there is the gift of God, the grace of God bestowed upon you, the pardon of your sins, the gift of the Spirit, and eternal life: thus the simplest believer has in his soul the germ of all that God has to say to him.

In our second address, looking at the same subject, we noticed the purpose of God in the 10th verse of the first chapter of Ephesians, - that He is going to head up all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and in earth. Everything is to be redeemed, everything to be brought into the good of the gospel. We are told first that God has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of the times, Christ is to be the Head, Centre, and Administrator of all the will of God

in heaven and in earth. It is mightily comprehensive: and as our hearts take in God's plan, we find that we have a peculiar and unique place in connection with that plan.

Secondly, we looked at the Person of Whom we read in the end of the chapter. God raised Him from the dead, leaving behind all that belongs to sinful man and the first man's sinful history, all of Satan's power, and the world. He is beyond everything. Not only has God raised Him from the dead, but He has set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. He is not on the earth, but He is exalted as the risen Man far above all principality and power. Whatever we may know of these mighty beings, mightier than ourselves - far above them all is Jesus at God's right hand in the heavenly places. He has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church. Every believing heart, every young Christian as well as every mature Christian, can look up and say, "I see that this worthy Saviour whom I have confessed as my Lord, is the One whom God entrusts to carry out this stupendous plan. He is 'Head over all things'." And when it says "Head over all things to the Church", it is not the same as Head of the Church. The church down here on earth, composed of every Christian, is connected with a Person whom God has set as Head over the creation, Head over men, Head over kingdoms, Head over everything. The church recognises that Christ is Head over all things; it is a sweeping inclusion of everything in heaven, and in earth. We know the One Who is the divinely designated Head. The church in the meantime is His body, as it states at the end of the first chapter.

Then thirdly, we saw in the 5th chapter the Partner that is given to Christ in connection with that wonderful place. The Church of God called out at the present time, is quite different from the saints of the Old Testament and from those of the world to come. We live in a parenthesis in the ways of God. While Christ is set there, hidden from the world at the right hand of God; God is gathering out for Him a living, heavenly, company. Their calling is not the same thing as the calling of Old Testament believers, it is quite distinct. They are a company spoken of as His body, or the assembly, the church which is to be given to Him. But more than that, it is a company so united to Christ, so equipped, so indwelt by the Holy Ghost that as a whole it will be an adequate object for the love of Christ, to be the real sharer of His throne. His throne; I do not say the Father's throne. It is ours to be the companion of Christ through unending years, a unique place. You get illustrations in the Old Testament. You find, for instance, after Joseph's refusal by his brethren when he was carried down into Egypt, he obtained an Egyptian bride to share his honours. But let us understand that at the present time God is gathering out a heavenly company and to that company every saved soul, every Christian, belongs in this present dispensation.

Now may we study a little the particular relations of the Lord Jesus Christ to the assembly. In the language of Scripture, although we know that all things are put under Christ, we can truly say, we see not yet all things put under Him. We do not yet see kingdoms and men, and this lower creation, brought into order as they will be by and by, under His Headship. But we see Jesus: we are introduced to the Person who will bring everything to pass. By faith "we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." So we know the Person who is going to put all under God, and to rule all for His glory. Here on earth is the sphere in which His glory and His authority are

not at present recognised; but it is a great thing for us Christians to see to it that we yield ourselves to His administration and come under His control so that we become even now pleasurable to God. In that way it was intended that the world to come, although still actually future, should be appreciated and enjoyed and illustrated in the church of God even now. In the first chapter of Ephesians we have two things - 'purpose, and power.' We have the purpose of God indicated to us, and we have the power indicated by which God is going to bring all this about. Look at the 9th and 10th verses of the first chapter. There we read of "His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, for the administration of the fulness of times, to head up all things in the Christ" (N.Tn). Then, in connection with the apostle's prayer, verse 19, he prays that we may know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead." As God wrought with mighty power to raise Christ out from amongst the dead by whom He was surrounded, and to introduce Him into that scene of glory at His right hand, so is the power that is in operation towards us. God would have us to learn that He has taken us up and has drawn us out from among the dead by whom we are surrounded, and has linked us up with that glorious Person in the heavenlies. The second chapter unfolds it further, but this is the power that is in operation toward us. It has picked us up, and will not drop us until it has us with Christ and like Him. The apostle prays that God would open the eyes of our hearts to see the glory with which we are connected, and the power that is operating for its completion; so that we might come more and more under the present administration of Christ.

Then in the 2nd chapter we learn two things which will greatly aid us in understanding this. One is grace - the mighty grace of God: "God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ." Viewed from the stand-point of His purpose this is what His grace has affected, - that when He raised up Christ from the dead we are looked at as being quickened together with Him, and He has raised us up together with Him. You see the mighty power of God operating towards us from His stand-point; the object of it all being to set forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Grace has picked us up from such awful depths, and by such mighty power, and in such a wealth of mercy, in order to fulfil the purpose of love, - "For the great love wherewith He loved us." He has associated us in His own mind with Christ Who is in "the heavenly places." If we are then to be associated with Christ, it is surely only right that we should learn all we can about Christ and that we should seek to come under His administration and grow in the purpose of His will, while we are down here.

It goes on to say, in verse 10, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Now if you would set your face in that direction and humbly desire to understand the grace of God, and to be in the good of it, you would realise what is necessary, that is the Spirit. The Spirit is given; it is part of the gospel. The remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost; these are constituent parts of the gospel. When you believe, after you have forgiveness of your sins, the gift of the Spirit is also yours. But this Spirit is given to take us up and to lead us in the exercise of our hearts up to the very source of all. Look at verse 18 of chapter two, "For through Him (that is Christ) we both (that is the former Jew or the former Gentile now saved and

brought into this one association and blessing), have access by one Spirit unto the Father." When it says, "The Father," I apprehend that it is not exactly our Father, nor a question of our individual relationship to Him as sons, but the Father. That is to say, the One Who has given birth to all this system of glory. I think you get in the 17th verse of the first chapter the explanation of it, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." Who is it that has conceived the thought? Who is it that is the Author, the Source of all the blessing, if it be not the Father? The Holy Ghost not only gives us the knowledge of the blessing, but it is as though He says, "I am competent to lead you up to the knowledge of the Father from Whom the blessing has come." And you find that at the present time we are, in the 22nd verse said to be builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The second chapter, I suggest brings these two things before us, Grace and Power; the Spirit is given to lead us into the present enjoyment of it.

Now in the 3rd chapter we come to two other things, revelation and prayer. You may ask "How is it that we have come to know these things?" "Well?" says the apostle, "I will tell you how I have this knowledge of the mystery of Christ." He says in the 2nd and 3rd verse of the 3rd chapter, "Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to you-ward, how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery." It was not given in the Old testament scriptures. But when Christ had died, and risen again, and gone to glory, and the Holy Ghost had been given, He laid hold in a special way of Saul of Tarsus. It is in this connection that the Lord Jesus Christ made known this mystery to that wonderful apostle of Christ. In the very moment of his conversion there seem to be some hint of it, because when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians he did not know that they were united to Christ as members of His body; but the Lord Jesus at the moment of arresting him, (intervening in his wild career, and laying hold of him for glory and blessing) said, "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou Me?" To complete the truth you have this vessel of divine communications instructed in the mystery, as he goes on to say, "In other ages it was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs." There is the bringing into being of this new formation of which there was no hint in the Old Testament; the bringing in of converted Gentiles as well as converted Jews to form one body in Christ. As he goes on to speak of it in the third chapter he becomes so impressed by the magnitude of it, that, after unfolding the truth of the mystery he seems to say, "Not even I, the apostle, can make it good to your souls." In the 7th verse he says, "I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

Here he introduces us to a second administration. In the 1st chapter we read, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ: ('dispensation' or 'administration' as the word may more correctly read). That, of course, is future: when all the different lines of God's working with men will converge, and Christ will take up every one of them. In the administration

of the fulness of times He will head up all things in Christ; but, says the apostle, "There is another administration, and that is now." He says in verse 9, "To make all men see what is the administration (the same word) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God . . . that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known in the assembly the manifold wisdom of God." There are the two administrations. There is one future, when Christ will bring everything into order, when He will subdue all enmity and hostility, putting down all enemies beneath His feet, and when the kingdom will be established in power. But there is the present administration, and that administration goes on in the assembly. You may ask, "What do you mean by the assembly?" Do not get any wrong idea into your minds; do not think that it means any denomination; do not think that it means any select company of Christians gathered in this hall or any other hall. The assembly includes within its circumference all Christians, and, from the stand-point of the Epistle to the Ephesians, all Christians from the day when the Holy Spirit first came, to the day when the Holy Spirit will leave with the church, and we shall be caught up into the air to meet the Bridegroom of our hearts.

The truth in the Epistle to the Ephesians is different from that in the Epistle to the Corinthians which looks more at the local constitution of the assembly in each town where God has wrought in grace. The local assembly covers the whole number of Christians in each city, who although they belong to that locality geographically are under the One Lordship of Christ, and are unified administratively by one set of instructions, the new order, intended to obtain all over the world. They act locally in view of what is to the honour of Christ everywhere, in the whole church of God; but they are the local expression of it. That is the teaching of Corinthians.

Here in Ephesians it is the church as a whole, and so it says, "Christ loved the church." It does not just mean a little number of Christians in any one town, but in all its fulness the whole church of God, from the day that the assembly was first formed on the day of Pentecost to the day when He calls the church home and presents it to Himself in glory. The assembly, the whole community of Christians on earth, is the circle in which the blessed administration of Christ as the Head is to be discovered now. We learn to be subject to Him, to derive from Him, to recognise Him as the source of Direction, and as the resource of His people. It is this present administration that we would now consider.

Look then at the fourth chapter. I should first say that in connection with the revelation of the mystery we have again the apostle turning to prayer. He tells us how this mystery was revealed to him that he might make it known; but as to the making good of it in our souls he cannot do that. Hence he says, "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." I feel how very frequently we deprive ourselves of the force of some of these scriptures. It is not the love of Jesus dwelling in the saint saved by grace. Of course we would love to see the blessed Lord Jesus precious to every believing heart. But that is not the meaning of it. It is that Christ, the Son who is the Head, Whom God has designated, and anointed, and appointed, as Head of all this great system of blessing, may dwell in the hearts of those who compose the

assembly, by faith, that they “May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” And that we all might come so completely under the guidance of the Spirit, and under the control of Christ, that we may understand in our collective, assembly life what a blessed thing it is to be under the administration of Christ. Let us remember if we do turn to prayer, that chapter three, verse 20, says, “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the assembly by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages,” - the present included. Let us remember that God by His Holy Spirit is working in us; and in proportion as the Spirit of God works in us (it is according to the power that worketh in us), even so will this desirable end be accomplished, that there will be glory to God in the assembly. People are very apt to quote this verse, as to His being able to do more than we ask or think. But as to the actual setting of it, it is that God’s intention with respect to us might be carried out; that the Christ might dwell in our hearts, so that there might be carried on this present administration in the assembly.

Now look at the way in which we are influenced by this administration. After speaking in the 4th chapter of seven things that are common to us all, in verses 4, 5, and 6, he says, in verse 7, “But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” In connection with the One Body, and the One Spirit, it is not that God passes all into a mould and fashions everyone alike. It is not that God produces absolute uniformity, although the unity is perfect. Looking at things from the standpoint of Ephesians, this oneness embraces all Christians; but each one of us has his own place in the body. It is quite a unique place, the little function of my life is not precisely like the little function of your life; each is connected with its own position in the body. There is unity, all under the direction of the One Head, but there is not uniformity. All must be formed in the life of the Head, all equipped from the Head, all directed from the Head. In a body that is properly operating everything is subject to the Head. We enjoy this now; it says, “Now unto everyone of you is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Christ Who descended has gone up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. From the very lowest to the very highest point Christ is Head, and everything is to be brought under the administration and control of Christ. In the future that administration will be manifested so that everybody will see it; but at the present time it is to be seen only in the assembly.

Now as to the assembly; look at the wonderful resource, and the perfect administration of the One Who is the Head. “He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints.” There should be a semi-colon after the words “for the perfecting of the saints.” A different word is used in the next clause; instead of “for” it should read “with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ.” Unfortunately words that are different in the Greek are not always made different in our authorised version. The object that God had in committing all this administration to Christ is at the present time for the perfecting of the saints. If you understand that you will see that Christianity is not come into the world for the making of the earth better - the whole service of Christ at the present time, and the whole administration of Christ at the present time, is for the perfecting of the saints, not for the betterment of the world. The way that He carries it on is by

constant ministry from Himself. Of course there is the ministry of the Apostles and prophets in the New Testament scriptures. But there is the constant ministry from the Head in glory, so that we may be reminded of the truths they were inspired to give us, and that their influence may be made distinctly real in all our lives. The evangelist is just as much for the perfecting of the saints as the apostle. The evangelist who thinks that he is only to save souls is mistaken. The apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher, are all for the perfecting of the saints. But how? Well, if there were no evangelists there would be no saints to perfect. The evangelist is used to bring light to the soul, to turn men to the Saviour, and they trust Him and receive the Holy Ghost. But what after that? The evangelist has to bring them into the circle where they can be cared for, "for the perfecting of the saints," that they may be brought into the circle of Christ's administration and receive of all His fulness and come under His Headship all the way through. "Till we all come," this goes right on to the end; it is with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Coming to the 14th verse we read, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." It is not a question of running after this man or that man, this elder or that elder. The object of all ministry is to bring people into contact with the Head, and instead of being children tossed to and fro, that they may grow up unto Him. The work of the ministry in every form is for this purpose; to put people into living attachment to the One who is the Head. When that is the case, you will see that not only Christ is the One Who is going to bring everything into accordance with the will of God by and bye, but that everything in your life and among the saints is to come now under the administration of Christ. Hence it says in the 15th verse, speaking of holding the truth in love, you grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head.

If you read the rest of the Epistle you find some of the "all things" that come under the direction of Christ as Head. If we speak of our lives, our ordinary day by day lives, these too come under the control of the Head of the new race. Putting off the old man and being renewed in the spirit of our minds, we "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (verse 24). Then he says, give up such things as lying and deceit and lust; all these things are done with, we have put off the old man. Then as to our whole business life, coming into contact with the world, let each man speak truth one to another. There are no such things as 'white lies', 'business lies', in the new man. When you come down to the detail, it speaks of the relation of wives to husbands, of children with their parents, or servants with their masters. Each ought to take his character as a Christian from the One Who is the Head; each one is to live in subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ as His Head. You find many a Christian going on with all sorts of religious or worldly entanglements. But if he looks up to Christ Who is the Head in all things, it has the effect necessarily of severing him from all that which is of an independent or worldly formation; whether it is in the way of moral reformation, or in the way of religious associations and organisations. If you are entangled in anything that is not after Christ, you are not in a position to carry out this scripture. I would earnestly pray, and ask that we may all be concerned about coming more distinctly under the direction and administration of Christ as Head, and that we may discover

in Him every resource. You may depend upon it, such is His care for His people that He will supply every need, in spite of all the weakness and sorrow of the present times. He will supply us with grace so that we may be able to grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head; even Christ; "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

LETTERS

SEPARATION AND ASSEMBLY ORDER

November 3rd, 1925

My Dear Brother,

Thank you for your letter. The spirit of exercise which it evinces is always a feature which turns one's heart in thankfulness to God. Once we are separated to the true Christ, the Christ of God, we are in a position to avail ourselves of all His wisdom, power, grace and love for the various troubles we are called upon to face.

It is a fallacy to suppose that any ground can be discovered or reached whereon we may avoid all difficulty, escape all trouble and exercise, or find every brother and sister intelligently and fully in accord with that position. Assembly history starts in the New Testament with the apostles; but how far from perfect were those assemblies which were gathered even under their ministry.

It would seem that at first the passage on to true Christian ground was gradual. The Jewish remnant and proselytes who were blessed at Pentecost still held public gatherings in the temple precincts; and what enraged the priests was that public teaching by the apostles went on in the very stronghold of the legal, but now effete, Jewish system. The Christians, however, were by the descent of the Holy Ghost baptised into one body, and in the confession of the Lord Jesus, bore testimony to Israel's rejection of Him, and of His exaltation BY and TO the right hand of God. And through Peter's ministry there was for a time still the offer of grace to Israel if repentant.

Even after the call of Paul, and I may say his first missionary journey with the gospel, there was still a close link with the law, and circumcision, and the temple, as ch. XV in the Acts reminds us; and as late at ch. XVI we learn how many thousands there were that believed, in Jerusalem, who were all zealous of the law, etc. etc.

But while much was borne with, and many links at first existed with the synagogue, it seems that assembly truth as Paul administered it, first had a pure place after he had testified to the synagogue in Corinth, and then departed thence; Acts XVIII, 7. Not but what he still presented the Gospel to the Jew first, as, for example, in verse 19, and XIX, 8, but at that point, IN CORINTH, he breaks with the synagogue, and IN THAT CITY, where true separation from the judged religious system of Judaism was first marked, HE LAID THE FOUNDATION OF TRUE ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY: 1 Cor. III, 10-11. For in that passage in Corinthians it is not merely a question of a sinner receiving the gospel. Paul did not lay the GOSPEL foundation, for souls were blessed through Christ and received the Holy Spirit before Paul was converted. But by his ministry he did in Corinth lay down the grand foundation truth of the assembly in testimony here. And, be it noted again, it was when the rejection of Christ by the Jewish religious opponents led to the step of separation from the religious system which refused Christ His place, that the truth could be both taught and practiced in separation. I do not see how you could have had it otherwise. How could you have seen a low assembly in function in the synagogue? I mean according to what you get taught in the

Corinthians. THERE everyone was to be subject to the leadership of Christ, and ANY brother, if led of Him and by the Holy Ghost, might so far take part. This would not have been possible, nor would it have been tolerated, in the ordinary synagogue.

So that not until you have the truth as taught in separation in Corinth could you have the assembly in function. And in his ministry there Paul laid the foundation of all true ASSEMBLY testimony.

No doubt the topstone is reached in the epistle to those at Ephesus, which looks on to the completion of the counsel of God as to the whole church. But there again we may say it was only learned in separation, for he separated the disciples, and they henceforth met in the school of one Tyrannus.

Now these things may help us to see that in so far as we mix with a religious system which is marked for the judgment of God, we put ourselves in a position where it is impossible to keep in the full truth of the assembly now revealed. How anyone who has once tasted the liberty and preciousness of a circle where Christ alone is acknowledged, and His fulness has been tasted and enjoyed, can afterwards go to and settle in "the establishment" or any of the so-called "nonconformist bodies" one does not understand. Yet evidently the epistle to the Hebrews was written because there was danger that those who had been drawn out of the old and decaying system should be tempted back to it.

But even when separated to Christ there is every danger that saints should be tempted to admit and shelter in their midst the principles and practices of the world out of which grace has brought them, or of the religious system from which truth has delivered them. Of the former, Corinthians itself gives us a clear example; where instead of living under the sway of the holy Lord, using the resources they had in Christ, and walking according to the truth of the House of God, the Body of Christ, and liberty of the Spirit, and - we may add - of Man in Christ, they allowed the use of man after the flesh with HIS worthless resources, and alas, his luxuries and pleasures, his looseness, and his ready allowance of the first man. Even SIN seemed to be allowed, gross and almost unnameable sin, under the plea of liberty. But liberty for the first man whom God has condemned should rather be called licentiousness.

Of the latter, Colossians and Hebrews are evident examples. Here it is not the bad side of man after the flesh, which saints were in danger of allowing. With the Colossians it seems to have been largely the mentality of the first man, his philosophy, his mental training, his reasoning powers, and especially in religious forms. It is a particularly subtle form of weakness, and in truth the denial of Christianity, to suppose that a man who is highly educated and trained in the world's schools, and has examined all the various systems of thought, ancient and modern, and has been theologically trained, and who has studied logic, mathematics, and science of all kinds, whether physical or metaphysical, will necessarily be the most useful or the most reliable of Christians. On the contrary; HE is likely to be the most useful, who having had all these "advantages" as the world calls them, renounces faith in all the subtle reasonings and conclusions of men, and in the spirit of a little child, receives with meekness the engrafted word

which is able to save our souls. Saul of Tarsus, the great helper of the saints in the Gentile world, says "what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, he had done with man after the flesh, and was not only content to be in contact with the fulness in Christ, but learned that that fulness was so complete that there WAS no fulness elsewhere. No one can describe the magnificance of the position into which the feeblest Christian is introduced, where - in Christ - he has every resource and is independent of the whole system of operation, the whole "modus operandi" of the world, and of the man whose world it is. That world, that man, wants his music, his sentimentality, his eloquence, his religious atmosphere, his architecture to aid "the religious sense," his organisation, his rubrics, his fasts, his feasts, his rules, his ordinances, and a hundred and one accessories, which, even in the case of a Christian, would smother his faith and quench the Spirit. How amazing the deliverance, how fascinating the liberty, where a poor once-imprisoned Christian emerges out of such a Maze of religiousness into God's light of day, where Christ is all in all.

With the Hebrews, it was more the allurements of a past religious system, which had had its place in God's ways while Israel was being tested. It had an antiquity of some 1500 years' duration; it had a thrilling history, was headed up in an earthly centre, and in its high priest always had an earthly head. It could boast of its central temple, of its grand ritual, of its pure law, its great festivals; and while its roots lay deep in the fact of its Divine inauguration, truly commanded the reverence and homage of every Hebrew heart all over the world. But it was not finality, for by its means, so imposing and material, God was foreshadowing all that was in his heart - to be established in Christ. And now Christ HAS COME, in Whom is finality. Hence, though of divine inauguration, the best religious system that the world has ever known, AND THE ONLY DIVINE ONE, has gone down, and is by God Himself set aside in favour of Christ alone. Where, then, is the religious system, be it old or new, Catholic or Protestant, national or sectarian, where is the religious system that God can acknowledge now that CHRIST has come? The saint who goes down to any system acknowledges what God does not acknowledge.

What shall I say more? We find that God in mercy, and our Lord Jesus Christ as having the key of David, has set before us an open door in these closing days. We find that through grace any Christian who is exercised about these things can get out to Christ from all the entanglements of man's systems, and find in true separation to Christ every fulness and resource. There is for him there the possibility of learning (without human trammels), the love of the Father's heart, the counsels of God, the glories, grace and love of Christ, and the whole range of God's good pleasure in the Man of His right hand, the second Man, and last Adam, the Son of His love. There, too, he may find in company with other Christians set free, the blessed liberty of the Spirit, and ministry from the Head in heaven for the members on earth, and enjoy the inestimable privilege of identification with the rejection of Christ, while in spirit he can be led into the holiest of all in the sense of the blessedness of the God to whom Christ has brought him, and in the enjoyment of the Father's love who is the source of it all. Moreover in the power of the Spirit he can come out face to face with men, to be here descriptive of Christ, in witness for Him in His absence, waiting for His return, and competent to face all the power of Satan, and the opposition of the world, and even all the storms and troubles of

earth, in the grace of Christ.

But all the true power of Christianity is seen only when saints are separated to Christ, and are loyal to that separation. Bring in the ways of the world, admit the thoughts and methods of man, and you have weakened everything. Israel, who had Jehovah for their King, wanted to be like the nations and to have a king of their own. Saints who are nominally separated to Christ ask for an organ for their work, a leader in their prayer meetings, a chairman for their conventions, a banner for their parades, the advertisement of their services, magic lanterns or lantern processions, and a dozen other things, which are truly only "like the nations." And even the young people's meetings may easily degenerate into "socials" where hymn singing and jocular remarks and recitations are the fare on which they are nourished, to sustain them, forsooth, in a hostile world, where all of Christ is to be inwrought and expressed, and where the whole power of the devil is to be encountered. How the devil must at times "laugh in his sleeve".

The more we see of the true power and glory of Christianity, the more sensitive we become to anything that contravenes it, the more trivial do things appear which constitute the stock-in-trade of some. But — may one say it humbly — if they only knew the truth as God has shown it to us, the more readily would they drop these defiling substitutes for the power of the Holy Ghost and the glories of Christ.

But you ask how far can we go, and give the right hand of fellowship in such things. I say, NOT AT ALL. "Have no company with him" in 2 Thess. III, 14 is not ecclesiastical; it is moral. But it places within our reach a refusal to company with a man who, though outwardly in the Christian company is behaving in a way inconsistent with the truth of Christ. It has long been clear to me that I cannot associate in service with one whose modes of service are prejudicial to the truth of God. Whether it is in open air work, Sunday School work, gospel work at home, or missionary work abroad, whether speaking or writing, one finds that one cannot company with a man whose course is "disorderly and not according to the tradition which" says Paul "ye received of us."

And further, even as a great servant like Paul or Apollos might have difficulty and objection about going to Corinth at a given time when looseness was so shamefully practiced (see 1 Cor. XVI, 2; 2 Cor. 1, 23), so may a little and insignificant servant refuse to visit a gathering which is characterised by looseness, at a given time. But I humbly submit that he should as Paul did, GIVE HIS REASON FOR SO DOING. If servants were only faithful, much more exercise might be produced than is produced. Usually if one knows of hearts that are grieving over the laxity, one goes to encourage them; but always making it clear that the laxity allowed by some is in one's judgment utterly contrary to the Word of God and the truth of Christ.

I know that some say you are identified with everything that occurs in the assembly. This I utterly repudiate, when once saints are on Divine ground. Paul was NOT identified with the man in 1 Cor. v. He was NOT identified with the disorderly ones at Thessalonica. On the contrary he ministered and prayed and pleaded, and used the resources that he knew to be in the Lord, to correct the errors. And if there were faithful servants who would do this thing, and seek by ministry and

pastoral care to correct (while refusing to identify themselves with) the blunders we see to-day, there would be less of division and less of secession than we have seen. Where a meeting becomes thoroughly and entirely identified with an inconsistency, one could not commend to nor receive from it, for in such case it seems clear that "a little leaven" has "leavened the whole lump." It has degenerated from the true ground of the assembly to that of "a house public," if I may use the term. It is a place where liberty is allowed for the will of man, and that the assembly is not. Wherever "a little leaven" is at work we have to look and look and look again to the Lord to check its action; to pray, and minister, and present the truth of Christ so that consciences may be exercised and if possible the brothers or sisters who have tended to lead saints away may themselves be recovered. At times, I believe, the Lord may permit prolonged waiting upon Him, when relief from the exercise and pressure does not come at once; and He may even permit that an individual or some individuals who have been wilful may go to a length where they finally quit the meetings they cannot carry with them. Just how the Lord will intervene for the deliverance of the exercised saints who call upon Him one cannot say; but He cannot be untrue to Himself. I am deeply delighted, and take comfort in the thought, that we can call upon the Lord in every difficulty of this kind. Of course, if a trouble takes on a character which plainly requires excommunication, there can be no question whatever, and there ought to be no delay, for the Lord's glory. But in these things that so distress us, the presence and ways of those who are inconsistent with the truth of the assembly and Christ's place in it, and who bring in man's ways to the church of God, the same Lord who is over all is rich to all that call upon Him; and whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. It was so in salvation at the first; it is so in assembly history all along. (1 Cor. 1, 2).

Then also there is great encouragement in the thought that where things tend surely to departure God greatly honours the faith of an individual. As in the days of the judges, so to-day; a single man of faith and faithfulness may be used to steady things for his day and generation. We do happily find in many of the meetings men who have learned something of the truth, and stand in it. There has to be withstanding in times of attack, and standing when our own forces seem to be melting away. Of the two perhaps the latter is the more difficult.

As to a gathering receiving the ministry of a brother who is not on assembly ground, I would, I think, first ascertain if it were inadvertently, supposing him to be all right. But if wilfully, in defiance of the obligations of fellowship in the truth, it would close that door for me. I should not feel free to go to them until they came to own that that kind of independency savours not of brokenness of spirit, nor of the faithfulness which suits the Holy One and the True, in these days of confusion. Independency and free lanceism suits an unbroken will.

No – we are called by God to the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. All diverse from that is out of court. May God graciously be with us, and support our feeble faith, and even yet give us to see His hand in great deliverance. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." (Zephaniah III, 12). The conies are a feeble folk yet they make their houses in the ROCK. dear brother,

Warm love, dear brother,

The Lord cheer you, and indeed may you encourage YOURSELF in the Lord
your God.

Affy. in Him,

Wm. Hy. Westcott.

THE BODY OF CHRIST⁽¹⁾

February, 1930.

My Dear Brother,

You ask if the Pauline use of the word "Body" of Christ is the same as Luke xxii., 19, or xxiii., 52, or is it not in the sense of "Corporation" or "Regiment."

The actual word used is the same. To speak of what is divinely inspired on the human side, the gospel of Luke is universally recognised as written on Pauline lines or under Paul's influences.

There are many occasions on which Paul uses the simple word "body" (Greek, Soma). Leaving, for the moment, those passages that refer to the Church, all the other instances, I believe, refer to concrete substance animated by life; or (if the life be taken) to that same concrete substance, dead. Romans vi., 6, 1. Cor. xv., 40, and Col. ii., 17, might be cited as possibly needing, if not another interpretation, at least another application. But they do not affect your enquiry.

There remain the passages dealing with the Assembly of God. These are Romans xii., 1. Cor. xii., Eph. iv., and Col. ii. What other isolated instance there may be, must be viewed in the light of these.

Romans xii., 4, is illustration, Romans xii., 5, is application of the illustration. Forgive me for saying that if Regiment or Corporation had been what the Spirit had intended to convey, the figure or illustration actually given might appear to be unfortunate and misleading. We have many members in one Body, but these are all organically united. Adapted marvellously as the many organs and members are for their various uses, they are essentially one, and together form one living entity. They are not units each having its independent life, even though all were united under the control of a commander or director.

Romans xii., 5, is the application of the figure. With all the diversity to be found among Christians with individual exercises and activities, they are nevertheless an organic unity in Christ. That is, we are not thinking of a mere congregation of individuals, but of organs and members in a body. This is a wholly spiritual idea; it is not administration in a Corporation or Regiment, where all through training are unified, and as unified work together to a common end; but a body with differing members functioning with a common life. Hence this verse adds "we are all members of one another." Each is incomplete without all the rest. You cannot possibly say this of any aggregate of individuals even though unified.

One might say I am a servant of a Corporation, or I am a Private in a Regiment, but not "we are members one of another."

1. Cor. xii., 1-11, gives the same idea of diversity in unity, but signifies more particularly the divine Persons in the Godhead Who operate, and how They operate, in local assemblies. Then in v. 12 the illustration is again brought in of the body, and in v. 13 the application of it to the Church. It is not by enlistment as in a

Regiment (nor of course compulsory military service), nor is it by contracting for employment as in a Corporation, but by Divine work, and that viewed in two ways. We are baptised by One Spirit into One Body; the individuals with their once diversified interests are now brought on to new ground, where there is but one life and one interest. Every interest is submerged in the one interest, it is not a multitude of individuals agreeing upon a course of action, but an organic formation under one vital impulse. And further, we have been all made to drink into One Spirit. For there is the taking up on our part (as we say, subjectively) of this new status, the sinking of our individuality that we might, as members of One Body, be (and no longer regard ourselves as being ought else but) expressive of the life of Christ. Indeed, even as the body of our wonderful Redeemer was the vessel for the expression of the holy and blessed life of Christ in all its gracious and faithful activities on the earth, so is the Church formed as Christ's Body, to be the continuation in His absence of all that He is. The taking up of this wonderful mystery on our part is implied in the drinking into One Spirit. It involves the negation in ourselves and among ourselves of every phase of selfwill, of independent action, and all the introductions of the flesh, or the combinations and the suggestions of men after the flesh; and the committal in unqualified complacency to all that the Spirit would produce in us of Christ. The Body is for the expression of the life of Christ. In Corinthians this is taken up on the lines of local responsibility; what is true of the whole Church is to be consistently and locally expressed. And all the detail given in that chapter — foot, hand, ear, eye, nose, head — are such as are necessary to present the picture of a human body and are not such as to present the officials of a Corporation or the Officers in an army.

Ephesians iv. is the part of that Epistle which speaks of Christ as Head, Centre, and Administrator of the whole counsel of God. This particular chapter indicates how the administration is carried on in this present interval in the ways of God. Christ Who descended is now ascended, and is the One Who gave gifts for the perfecting of the saints. But the objects He had in view are the work of the ministry and the upbuilding of the Body of Christ. This administration is continued "till we come . . . to the full grown man"; it is not till we attain the effectiveness of a Corporation nor to the efficiency of a well trained Regiment. His present grace is promotive of stature — the full growth of the body organically considered. Verse 15 is specific in speaking of "growing up to Him in all things which is the Head," and adds that "from Him the whole Body . . . works for itself the increase of the Body unto it self-building up in love." This is by the grace of the Head flowing into the whole Body, fitted together and connected by every joint of supply. Certainly we should not speak of joints in a Corporation nor in a Regiment. The effectual working in its measure of every part is that the Body be well-proportioned, full-grown as to stature, and mature in development.

Col. ii. is part of the Epistle which, while it unfolds the glory and the competency of the Head, connects this with the most blessed teaching as to the fulness which resides in Him. Probably Chapter i., 19, refers to Christ in incarnation; and Chapter ii., 9, to Him in resurrection glory. As He is the image of the Invisible God, and in Him we see the concrete, and yet absolutely complete, representation of God — Himself being the Eternal Son and ever dwelling in the Father's love — so the very Creation He has formed is the working out in a material form of all His various glories and wisdom and power as Creator and Sustainer of

all. But for the display of His glory in the moral and spiritual sphere He is set forth as solving the tremendous question of good and evil, of death and resurrection, of order and disorder, of need and supply. For while every department of Creation has ever present needs and possesses no resource in itself, "in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; and from Him — our glorious Head in Whom we are complete and require not to add to Him — rolls down into every part of the universe, old creation and new, all the supply that is demanded, that the purpose of God in creating it may be fulfilled. None save the Church, which is his Body, is at present in the secret; none save His saints can trace their formation or their supplies to Him, none but they in this Dispensation are equipped to respond to God's great design and to use to the full His resources. But again in this connection, in the Pauline use of the word "Body" (Chapter ii., 19), we have the Head ministering to all the Body, united together by the joints and bands, and so increasing with the increase of God. This is not the increase of a Regiment which would be by the bringing in of recruits, or the increase of a Corporation which would be by the extension of its boundaries, or by the enlargement of its business. It is the development of the human frame by nourishment, and the healthy and proportionate growth of the parts, which serve the apostle with language to describe the increase of the Body. Here again the Church (the saints who form the Church) gives the idea of the vessel formed in which are to be set out the graces of Christ. We have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man, it is not that we are new men in this connection, but have put on the new man. We are invested with the moral features of the One Who is hid in God, and Christ is all and in all. The totality of Christ's excellencies and beauties requires the totality of His Body to express them in His absence.

Affectionately yours in Him,

W. H. WESTCOTT

THE BODY OF CHRIST (2)

MY DEAR BROTHER

I see in all those who advocate a general reception of Christians a defective presentation of the Body of Christ. Until deliverance is experimentally known there is no apprehension of what it is to be in the Spirit and not in the flesh. It is urgent for us all to apprehend that a new being, and a new state of being exists. The doctrine of the two natures can be held, and yet the Christian not be in true liberty, so as to take account of himself as judicially free before God, and free in conscience, in respect of the old; able to take cognizance of himself as having died with Christ to sin and being alive to God in Christ Jesus. The viii.th of Romans proceeds on the assumption that the vi.th and vii.th have been learnt, and is really descriptive of the Christian as a new being in a new state of being. It recognises the old creation around him and his having an old creation body with attendant pressure; but he is viewed as a new being shortly to be conformed even bodily to the glory purposed of God.

It is often pointed out that Romans lays the foundation for the truth that there

is one Body. (Chapter xii.). In the Body of Christ as Scripturally viewed there is no evil nature, there is nothing of the world, there is nothing of man. To get a right view of it we must eliminate from each and every person who is a Christian what he is in nature as a child of Adam. A man may be a Jew by nature, or a sinner of the Gentiles. He may be wise, mighty, high-born, or he may be foolish, weak, despised, a nonentity, in fact, in nature. But all these natural features, good or bad, disappear by the Cross. There is no way into the Body but by the Cross on the one hand (eliminating everything of man after the flesh), and by the baptism of the Spirit on the other (bringing in all that is of the new order of Christ). Ephes. ii. (13-16), affirms the first, I. Cor. xii. (12-13), the second.

It is true in the abstract that members of the Body should be received. Nor need a man's simplicity as a young convert, nor his ignorance as a saint, owing to want of teaching, be a barrier to his reception if there be no will or subtlety in his coming. In view, however, of the phenomenal development of the elements of philosophy and vain deceit (Col. ii. 6-10), there is exclusion of ritualism or of rationalism, there is exclusion of every movement under the Christian Name which is of the tradition of man, or after the elements of the world, and "not after Christ". If I may say so, no more is the Crusader movement after Christ than is the Salvation Army movement as such. We thankfully recognise that every Christian in such associations is, as a Christian, of the Body, but his man-made associations are not; they are "not after Christ."

The truth then that there is one Body, and that all Christians are members of the one Body, can only be spiritually discerned. Any Christian presenting himself for Christian fellowship is possessed of the title as being a Christian to reception; but it is his responsibility when challenged to shew that he is not using his title to bring in associations which that very title excludes.

We humbly recognise that the Lord has revived His truth this century past, and that as a remnant were restored to the land, the city, and the house, in Divine providence and mercy in the past dispensation — so God has recovered the distinctive truths of the Head, the Body, the Assembly, for us in this Dispensation. It has led to a movement of separation from all that is of man in the corrupt state of Christendom and the developing apostacy; every gathering should be satisfied that a man presenting himself for reception furnishes credentials which satisfy them as to their validity. If for example a man be introduced to them by a brother who is known to be careless in his own principles, they may justly demand delay until there be corroboration of his testimony.

Further, there are some who are confessedly "out" to destroy all "barriers", as they call them, and advocate, not only an unquestioning reception, but a free and easy intercourse with groups, companies, missions, churches, systems, from which the truth that there is One Body, when rightly understood and held, has separated us.

I am sure that their confusion arises from ignorance of the Body. Any saint pleading this truth as an excuse for receiving from, or going to, all and sundry, does not recognise that a Divine nature, a Divine formation, is necessarily exclusive. The Body is necessarily exclusive, for it is wholly the work of the Spirit of God. It is

co-extensive with the new man (Eph. ii., 15-16), and nothing that pertains to the old man can pass the Cross. There is in the Body no barrier against Christians as such, but there is obviously an utter and eternal barrier against the flesh in the Christian. There is the exclusion of legality and exclusion of lawlessness. There is the exclusion of both in order that we may be free to practise what is after Christ. This would be impossible in such associations, and hence the out-movement from them. We must all own to failure in the carrying out of this recognition of the Headship of Christ and the spiritual nature of the Body. But, certainly, recovery does not lie in the reintroduction of the conditions from which the knowledge of the truth delivered us. Care in reception is one of the Scriptural instructions given in the wisdom of God which is our safeguard in these days of wholesale departure. Apostles might come unannounced, but some others need letters of commendation (II. Cor. iii., 1). We are instructed to lay hands suddenly on NO man in Timothy days (1. Tim. v. 22). How much more need to refuse to do so now. A person coming unannounced to a meeting, his case affording no opportunity for consideration, must respect the exercise of those who care for the purity of their associations and the honour of the Name to which they are gathered. To receive such on his own individual testimony is to disregard every warning of scripture, as, for example, Acts xx., 29-30, I. Tim. iv., 1-3, II. Tim. iii., 1-9, Phil. iii., 2, 3, 17-19. Moreover, the more active or prominent a man is in Christian circles, the more incumbent it is to be assured in these days that he is not going to use his inside position for propaganda of principles which we believe to be contrary to the truth which we have learnt.

Referring to "Calling on the Name of the Lord," I have no doubt that it is a term descriptive of Christians as such, in contrast with those who call on other gods. But in a day of ruin we have to deal with those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Hence we can no longer rely upon face values, upon the "ipse dixit" of a person, we are to discover the moral qualifications in others, as well as practise them ourselves, which are spoken of in II. Tim. ii. ere we can find the fellowship suited to our calling and the path of the Lord for us to-day. No one can deny the difficulties nor lightly speak of the exercises that we face, but to cut the Gordian knot and declare ourselves free to go anywhere where there are Christians, is of course simply to abandon the path of separation to Christ, and to surrender all thought of maintaining the truth of the Assembly so graciously revived for us and so long enjoyed.

W. H. WESTCOTT

THE BODY OF CHRIST (3)

MY DEAR BROTHER,

It has been said that the root error of Rome has been to apply to the historical Church on earth the statements of Scripture as to what the Church is in the purpose of God.

To put the Romish conception into plain language we may state it thus. The Church is one, and since the Papacy is the only Church which makes even any

pretension to unity universal, you must belong to the Romish Church or perish. One Church has only One Head, and since the Pope is the recognised head of that Church, submission to the Pope is incumbent on all its members. In the Church is salvation, out of it damnation.

Such is a legitimate conclusion if their conception of the Church be the truth of God.

I have noticed how very distinctly of late there has been creeping in a tendency to an advanced school of objective thought among Christians, which leads them to apply to Christians in an absolute way what is true of them only in Christ, or as viewed in the Spirit, and in the purpose of God.

For example, take our membership in the Body of Christ. It seems so simple, and is so true, to say that all true Christians are members of the Body of Christ. Yet we need to understand that in the One Body as presented in Scripture there is no flesh, as we speak of the flesh in a believer; and there is nothing of man, as we speak of man after the flesh. All pertaining to man as in Adam, and all pertaining to the believer of inherent sin, has been eliminated by, because judged in, the Cross and death of Christ, and nothing of this enters into the mystical Body of Christ. Members of the Body of Christ? Yes, but only when viewed apart from flesh, or the workings of will, or the innovations of man as distinct from the work of the Spirit of God. We are reconciled to God in one body by the Cross. This rules every element of man out. We are by one Spirit baptized into one body for we have all been made to drink into one Spirit. This brings in all that is of the Spirit's work.

It is obvious then that in speaking of the privileges of Christians as members of the Body of Christ, we must regard ourselves as entitled to those privileges only in so far as we judge ourselves with regard to an independent will, to the workings of the flesh, or to any distinctions which man brings in in his intrusive zeal in the things of God. Christians are responsible to recognise in each other only what is of the Spirit of God; certainly not to recognise what is of the flesh, nor of fleshly zeal, nor of man. One who is a true Christian may present himself as a member of the Body of Christ, but we are bound to challenge him if under cover of that privilege he would bring in much that is of man, or flesh, or will.

There is exercise to be cultivated on this line in relation to much of what is true of every Christian. If I take the purpose of God in Ephes. i. "We are chosen in Christ . . . that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Thus is the delightful purpose of God unfolded to us. It is said, "chosen in Him," but "in Him" means the exclusion of all we are in ourselves. As to our historical presence and ways on earth, it is sheer folly to speak of every Christian being holy and blameless. A man must be conscienceless to apply to himself now in an absolute way what is true enough in the purpose of God. When the purpose of God is completed with the Christian, and we are in the place that that purpose has counselled for us, we shall be indeed absolutely so; and the light of that purpose shines upon us to guide our hearts now; but we have to discern the difference between love's purpose for us as seen in Christ and love's work in us now to wean us from all else!

I refer to one thing more. Christians are said in Scripture to be those who call on the Name of the Lord. This is our privilege as Christians. The Christian who calls on anybody else is inconsistent with his position as Christian. But to say that every Christian calls on the Lord out of a pure heart is confounding things that differ. Purification as presented in relation to the heart of a believer is a process. It is not part of his standing, but is connected with his personal state. See I. John iii., 1-3. If Acts xv., 8-9, be quoted, be it noted that the question in that Chapter is law versus grace and faith. It is shewn by Peter that God in His sovereignty did not employ any injunctions of law on circumcision to effect the change that had come over them, but that on the principle of belief of the Gospel, and through the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, they were saved and delivered from the impurities of their former lives, and their former national disqualifications. That every Christian will be pure in heart to see God goes without saying. To say that every Christian is pure in heart now is to say that every Christian is holy and without blame now; it is a blind surrender to the holiness by faith doctrine.

It is admittedly difficult in these days — not to find Christians, for Christians there are in tens of thousands in our land, but — to secure any definite concrete number of Christians all of whom have pure hearts. Yet difficult as it is, and more difficult as it must become, such when discoverable are to be acknowledged as our companions in the path of to-day. We certainly shall not discover them all; we may be disappointed in some of whom we hoped much, but with them we are to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace. This path will still require patience with some who oppose every demand for consistency with the truth, and ability to teach positively what we trust will produce consistency; but these four do not include self-will, expediency, laxity or acquiescence in what is contrary to holiness and truth. Calling on the Lord implies quiet holy reference to Him in every matter and in every contingency, and not turning to man or men. They who, being separated unto Christ nominally, and in the circle where the whole truth is welcomed, run away from difficulties and form for themselves another path, or join themselves to another company, may escape exercise, but it is not calling on the Name of the Lord.

Ever yours,

W. H. WESTCOTT

FELLOWSHIP

May 3rd, 1922.

Beloved Mr.-----

Yours of the 1st is before me, with its record of exercise before God. Would that I could help you more fully than I really am able.

Our fellowship as Christians is not what educated men can draw up, nor what a few saints agree upon, nor, certainly, is it a heterogenous mixture of everything that may like to present itself for incorporation. It is expressed for us in the language of

Holy Scripture.

“Truly our fellowship is with the Father,
and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1, 3.

“God is faithful by whom ye were called
unto the fellowship of His Son.” 1 Cor. 1, 9.

Fellowship with God must, as to its definition, be a fellowship at God's own level. The fellowship of saints is often lowered to what saints, certain saints, are agreed upon, or what they see, in their feebleness, of the meaning of Scripture. But in that case, and whilst we can usually give every credit for sincerity, the fellowship of saints is short, very short, of fellowship with God.

God has recovered much for us in the last three of four generations of what Christianity is, set forth in all its richness and fulness in the Risen Man Christ Jesus, the Son of the Father in truth and love.

Men have been permitted to see how great the privilege is of the Christian family and of the Christian Assembly, the liberty of the Father's presence, of the presence of God, the power which the Holy Spirit exercises when the restrictions of man's mind and hand are withdrawn, the unfoldings of the resources which are in Christ, and of His love and care for His Assembly with all the great designs which are to be effectuated in and by means of that Assembly.

Fellowship to be in the truth, must allow for the full expression of the truth. You cannot say that every saint must be at the full height of the Christian calling before he enters upon fellowship, because that would be exclusivism with a vengeance: and neither you nor I nor any saint living could be in it. But no saint, nor company of saints, can devise, construct or propose a fellowship which is SYSTEMATICALLY and AVOWEDLY committed to doctrines and practices short of the truth without becoming in principle a sect. And while this is done by every so-called sect, or denomination, it becomes more subtle and subversive of truth in proportion as it is nearer in its outward form to those forms which truth produces.

We have been shown by God's mercy, a path outside of what we call “system,” a path where we can be in consonance with the Headship and Lordship of Christ, and where we can set before our hearts and minds the twin objectives of Holiness and Truth, answering to Him who is THE HOLY and THE TRUE. Rev. 3, 7. You will remark that when you progress in the prophetic outline of the churches from Philadelphia to Laodicea, the One who is certainly Holy and True speaks of Himself as the Faithful and True. This does not mean that He ceases to be holy or that our practical holiness in correspondence with Him can be waived. But it implies that in closing days just preceding the rapture of the whole Church there will be need for emphatic faithfulness to answer to Christ, who never surrenders His witness for God. Rev. 3, 14.

If we were in denominations that had sunk below their own recognised standard, we should, I suppose, be exercised to get back to those primitive methods with which our denominations started.

But God has called us into the full light of Christ, and the only fellowship we can now take account of is that divine fellowship to which I referred in the beginning of this letter. As to its nature, and character and intimacies, it is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. As to its expression whether in one locality or in every place alike (1 Cor. 1, 2), it is by God's calling, the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. There is to be, (in the way of material, function, ways, administration, and spiritual aim), a counterpart in local assemblies — and that the same everywhere — of all that His Son Jesus Christ our Lord is in His exalted but hidden position.

It is a uniformity of exercise produced, not because we belong to a "circle of meetings," but by our being uniformly consistent with the truth of Christ. The same Christ presents Himself everywhere, and while giving room for variety in the different members of His body, and in the differing gifts, He will never become the author of inconsistencies with Himself.

If then, you find an individual saint who habitually acts in disregard of the Lord's will; if you find a company of saints adopting and avowing a principle of action which you see, according to Scripture, and which you know, in communion with Christ by the Holy Spirit, is neither holiness nor truth; if you find a collection or circle of meetings where the acknowledged and defended ways are not those which you learn to be Christ's ways in the Assembly, you cannot recognise either the individual or the circle as answering to Him. You do not unchristianise them, you do not abuse them, but in faithfulness and in truth you find your course to be clear of them; while, no doubt, the Lord who loves them will rebuke and chasten them as seems good to Him. Your path is, however, to hear His voice, and to open the door to Him, and He will sup with you, and you with Him.

The principles of "Open Brethren" are very fairly dealt with by Mr.—— in his recent booklet. Their fellowship, as such is not Christian fellowship according to faithfulness and truth, though the outward form of it approximates to the truth. They have baptism and the Lord's Supper, prayer meetings, Bible readings, Gospel preaching, and missionary work. Many who seek piety and earnestness are attracted by these features, and well they may be, so far as they go, but for all that (and all the more alluring and seductive because of it), they offer a substitute for the truth in that they leave out faithfulness to the truth.

But our present difficulty goes further than that. There is in your neighbourhood a meeting which has a peculiar history, and which, while it professes to disavow Open Brethren as such, yet adopts a hyphenated method of come and go with them. One or two able brothers among them put their defence in an exceedingly plausible form, as I know from correspondence with them; but while their arguments are specious, and very likely difficult to meet by simple souls, the upshot of the whole matter is that brethren in that meeting do come and go at will amongst Open Brethren, and are in principle and in fact — in spite of specious argument — on open ground.

Further, so weak have we become, so little versed in the true character of Christian fellowship at its full height, that many amongst us have candidly

demanding that we lower the standard of fellowship so as to allow of these hyphenated associations, to admit of them as a recognised principle of action; so that though we know of men who do go to Open Meetings (and who esteem it a right and proper thing, defending their actions in various degrees), yet we have little or no power to discipline them in the Lord's Name. My grief is that the whole standard of truth has been so lowered amongst us, as the Laodicean spirit asserts itself, that there is disappearing the priestly power to discriminate between clean and unclean in relation to the testimony of the Lord.

This is not confined to one company of brethren alone. You might find one kind very particular about exclusion, who are exclusive as the Papacy, where the fear of men, and of one another, is a very large if not dominant feature. This, while it may be like in outward form to what truth produces, lacks the sweetness of grace. The system as such stands self-condemned, for the One to whose fellowship we are called was full of grace and truth. There is separation of a kind, but it is produced by decrees, so that as I have known personally among them, souls are held in bondage because they know their fellowship is maintained by the dread of man, and shuts out many without cause.

But our own danger is largely the other way. Laodicea is that state of the assembly in which position is claimed, accompanied by a laxity and self-sufficiency wholly foreign to the position; an entire rejection of exercise before the Lord as to what suits Him as the Faithful and the True Witness, the Amen, the beginning of the creation of God. There is failure to recognise finality in Christ, and there is the tolerance of that unsubdued will which was the ruin of the old creation. Along with the spirit of amalgamation which is abroad in the world there is a kindred movement in the professing churches, the effort to discover some formula which will result in all being able to meet on a common platform. In the world it is heading up in the idea of unity, or association, or federation, of which, alas! Christ is not the Head. In the churches it is not proposed on the ground of the Headship of Christ so much as upon common agreement among professed believers. It amounts to this that as long as we are all Christians nothing matters. The call of God back from the captivity, the revival of the House, the re-discovery of the Divine Centre, these things are nothing to those who would have us break down all barriers. If you come back to Jerusalem to the House, you must respect the laws of the House, and what is due to the name and glory of Jehovah. If one had hitherto — though an Israelite — been dwelling in Babylon, and had acquired the ways of Babylon, he may desire to go up to Jerusalem and worship in the Lord's House, but to do so according to God he must abandon his Babylonish ways, and associations, and purify himself according to the purification of the Sanctuary. The conflict in Ezra's and Nehemiah's days was incessant. Oh! how the enemy sought by every sort of artifice to break down the spirituality of the movement. What letter-writing there was. What alliances were formed. What influences had to be countered, in order to preserve that which God restored. You will not fail to notice that Ezra is followed by Nehemiah, and that once you have the House in order the City follows. A decree was issued for the one by Cyrus, but a second decree was issued for the other by Darius, equally important in its place. The House is the first thing, of course; the wall is the second. Many seem to want the House and its forms, but without the wall.

This is a large subject, but I conceive it to be at the bottom of the local trouble I have referred to. There is no wall of separation between the ground that God has recovered for us and that which is more decidedly and distinctly under the enemy's hand. In the rebuilt city there are gates, but gates are to admit those who are to be admitted **IN THE ORDERED WAY**. All is to be according to Divine order. There is no laxity, no playing fast and loose. Every one who comes into the circle where Jehovah is owned must submit to the responsibilities of that position. There was no compulsion to come into Jerusalem, but the idea that those who did so were to have no regard to that administration which was recognised there and appointed of God would be treachery and infidelity to Jehovah.

I feel that no one but the Lord Himself can guide us in our exercises just now, but my whole soul revolts from the thought of those hyphenated associations. They will work evil; of that I am certain. Those who practise them will discover any plausible excuse possible, but of the effect on meetings and on the testimony of the Lord generally I have not the slightest doubt. The good Lord deliver us.

Always affectionately your brother,

(Signed) Wm. Hy. Westcott.

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Extracts from Letter dated Jan. 4, 1928.

Referring to your postscript of a week ago in which you ask as to the possibility of quoting Scripture to justify our refusal of doubtful associations, it seems to me that ignorance of Scripture on the one hand, and lack of consistency with what Scripture brings before us on the other, account for much of present failures.

Apparently you find that in quoting J. N. D. you are met by the sort of slogan cry "tradition," and you ask "how far do you consider **OUR** judgment permissible?" As a simple answer I should say "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Rom. 14. 23, and "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," ver. 5.

It may be pointed out that an exercised conscience responds to the Word of God even as clay to the seal. Consequently the moral exercise of one brother may be comparatively scanty if he knows little of God and His Word, while the moral exercise of another who knows more of God and His Word may be very acute.

* * *

It is not a question of what J. N. D. says, nor of what Spurgeon did, nor of what St. Augustine wrote, but of our being formed in moral exercise by the Word of God bringing all before us that is true in Christ, 1 John 2, 8. If I find that in a certain matter Augustine or Spurgeon followed the Lord it is joy to me to think of it, and I imitate their faith, but not because they did it. Faith led them to do a certain thing which is according to Christ and Christianity, and I do it because I see it to be of Christ. The apostle says, "be ye followers (imitators) of me, **EVEN AS I AM ALSO OF CHRIST.**" That is our rule. If we think of those later than the apostles we have

“Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you THE WORD OF GOD, whose faith follow,” Heb. 13, 7. In so far as they spoke THE WORD OF GOD to you remember them; in so far as they themselves obeyed that word in faith, imitate them. It is not a blind attachment to a leader, not doing things because a leader does them, but only so far as they had the Word of God in all its undiluted purity as the basis of their life and ways.

* * *

Your exercise is to learn all you can of Christ and the present purpose of God as to Christ and the Church. With your whole heart, and in true affection for Him and His interests, you concentrate on that which you believe and know to be God's mind for the moment in the light of His Word, no more committing yourself to any support of man's RELIGIOUS systems than you would to his POLITICAL and SOCIAL aims. It is unfortunate that saints whom you love are entangled, but you know that you will not help them by getting entangled yourself. The more separate you are, and the more you are consistently and continually separate, with meekness and firmness, the more power you will have to really help them. Naturally if they see that you can on occasion go into the system, so as outwardly to appear as part of it, they feel that you are not wholly sincere in your objection to it. Nor could you do so if you deeply realised Christ's place in the Church or the Holy Spirit's condemnation of all man's institutions for its regulation and control. Clerisy and lawlessness are equally foreign to the constitution of the assembly of God, and inimical to the true prosperity of those who glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. 1, 31. It is only by the Spirit that the things of God are known or made effective.

To sum up then, I see that to mix with denominations, missions, and the principles that have given “Open” Brethren their birth and history, is disloyalty to Christ, damaging to my own soul, and tends to scatter the faithful ones instead of strengthening the things that remain. I see that to follow saints who idolise certain gifts, and chase after certain lines of ministry, so as to make their fellowship sectarian in principle, is to adopt a course which makes ourselves sectarian, and takes us off the ground of the assembly of God, leading us to despise others who do not concentrate on our particular line. I see also that there are many dear brethren who are now separated from us by historical division, who never ought to have separated or have been driven to separate and with whom one can have the fullest individual sympathy and prayerful intercourse, and — while admitting the difficulties that surround the question of coming together in unrestrained communion — and refusing to go BEFORE the Lord — can look to Him that He may dispose our hearts one and all to listen for His voice. To ignore His hand upon us in permitting these breaks would be fatal; to sacrifice any part of the truth for the sake of being together would be fatal, and would deny the true Christ and the full Christ, who is the Centre of gathering. But where He leads to our mutual humbling before Him, and unmistakeably leads the way so as to command the recognition and confidence of those who “fear the Lord and think upon His Name,” it would be wrong to refuse His leading. Only where there is this humbling would one even consider the matter of “association” of which you have spoken.

Underlying much of the looseness which has been our bane at all times (I remember nearly 50 years of the tendency), there is often much of secret pride and

self-importance. "MY gift" "an open door for ME", often leads a man astray from Christ. To go to ready made audiences in chapels and missions is an easier road than the rugged path of door to door work, and the feeling of the shame and reproach attaching to those who are utterly separated to Christ. If the Lord calls a man out to His Name who is distinctly gifted for service He will use the gift He has given in ways consistent with His Name, and not lead, surely, into compromise. I see no reason why a separated soul should not be a missionary, or an open-air preacher, a tract distributor or a doer of good works, while refusing every association other than the assembly which He has formed, and in the truth of which we seek to walk. Where the use of the gift is pleaded to take us into circles where the truth of Christ and His assembly is perverted, it unquestionably appears to me to be a perversion of the gift; and I do not think the Lord ever intended it to be so.

In the light of the Scripture, I can only pity the Christian who, instead of getting to God and His Word, only cries — parrot like — "Tradition."

With warm love in the Lord,

Affectionately yours in the truth,

WM. HY. WESTCOTT

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS (1921 to 1935)

11th April 1921.

There are wonderful possibilities among the young people. But their very energy and zeal needs to be under the sweet control of the HOLY Spirit, and directed so as to contribute to the testimony of the Lord in these days. How difficult it is to keep activity Holy, and in loving everybody to have the loins girt about with truth. There are a few vigorous men who believe they are right, that all Christians must be received qua Christian, regardless of associations: and that all Christian activity bespeaks fellowship from us: and that every invitation to preach in any place is "an opening from the Lord."

7th December 1921.

Of necessity, where assemblies are independent, the difficulty is to charge home upon them any accepted body of doctrine; and in fact you find very wide digression among them from anything like a fixed standard . . . There are very wide differences of practice in the midst of the Open Meetings as Mr. C . . . points out. There have been in some localities efforts to curb the looseness by close examination of persons who present themselves, and by the demand for letters of commendation. But with all this comparative strictness in these cases, as to reception, the individuals move freely into other places in full fellowship with the loose meetings: so it is evidently no matter of principle or of subjection to Christ, but of local expediency. Re-actions have taken place against looseness from time to time, but where the truth of the Headship of Christ remains unknown, or unrecognised, the only result seems to be the formation of a very strict sect, as in the case of the "Needed Truth" movement. Or where the cry is for power and signs of power, many of them have slipped into the so-called "Pentecostal" movement.

It seems to me one of the gravest distractions of all from the truth to take a certain proportion of it and give it out as the whole. The evangel is not the bond of Christian unity. Congregations gathered by Gospel attractions are not necessarily on assembly ground. Nor is breaking of bread a necessary indication of true fellowship according to the truth, for of course Christadelphians imitate this . . . But all this when put together and systematised is only a most dangerous substitute for the Assembly of God if it be not according to the truth of the Assembly of God.

April 23 1921.

It gives me a good deal of comfort to hear of any exercise at all as to the grave trend so noticeable in Christendom generally, and so distinctly observable among ourselves. The movements in the world and the worldly church all seem to have more suggestion of benefit to man than thought of God's will and Christ's glory. We too are in danger of putting what we call "the good of souls" above every consideration of "the testimony of the Lord" which is our banner in 2nd Timothy days (ch.i.8).

The “man of God” is the man who is held by the revelation that God has given for the time in spite of the defection from it. He is the ordinary Christian who gets the whole light of Christ, and shirks no ray of it, even in days when it is being refused by professing Christians. The latter form themselves into endless communities, none of which are on the lines of God’s thought in Christ: and as the great majority enrol themselves under one or other of these different standards, he becomes more and more circumscribed in his associations in proportion to his faithfulness to Christ. It is part of his discipline and his test, that — possessing a heart that takes all saints in — he is yet debarred from association with them by reason of those associations which they have chosen and made their own.

One of the most damaging misinterpretations of Old Testament Scripture I have met with lately in our magazines, has been the misunderstanding of the historical books of Kings and Chronicles. In 2nd Chronicles for example, division took place among the people of God when ten tribes went to Jeroboam and two to Rehoboam. It would seem from 1 Kings xi., that even when God promised the ten to Jeroboam, He was still careful to point out that Jerusalem was the alone place for the people’s worship together: i.e. the division was to be an administrative, political one, and not a religious one (see verses 32, 36).

But Jeroboam made himself and his people into a religious denomination by adopting a worship which was on lines of his own and not God’s (1 Kings xii. 25-33) ‘The King’, ‘he’, ‘Jeroboam’, “made,” “set,” “ordained,” “devised,” etc. In a few short verses you have God’s order set aside, God’s place refused, and man’s method substituted in the things of God.

The ten tribes, then, in that position, become a type not of the world as our Magazines have taught, but of a corrupted Christianity, where it is no question of what God has instituted for His assembly, but what is convenient to or desired by the people. “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem.” The whole point is lost if we take the meaning to be a difference between the world and the saint: it is rather a difference between such as seek to go on with God’s thoughts, and those of God’s professed people who — without ceasing to be His people — accommodate themselves to a state of things religiously constituted apart from God’s word, or at any rate not according to it.

This makes Abijah’s position so strong in 2nd Chronicles xiii., and Asa’s in chapters xiv.; and xv. This makes the latter’s failure in Chapter xvi. so sad. This made the good king Jehoshaphat’s “affinity with Ahab” in Chapter xviii. to be sternly reprehended in chapter xix. And while he seems to have bowed to the rebuke of Jehu the seer as to the matter of fellowship, he yet joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel to make ships to go to Tarshish: thinking that though fellowship was not permitted or approved, to join hands in service would be all right. Then Eliezer (help of God) prophesied against Jehoshaphat saying, “Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works.” And the ships were broken. (Ch.xx.35-37).

How plain these lessons are, and yet how their teaching is ignored, and to our loss. In a day when corruption and a spirit of human accommodation infect professing Christians, how needful not only to be apart from the world, but from

fellowship with the corruption, even to the refusal of association in service. None but a subject heart will recognise it: but I am persuaded that power and blessing be in separation: and that those who lead us into open brethrenism or into the more easily recognised forms of human system, are those who, in spite of their earnestness and zeal, contribute to weakness and disintegration.

With reference to the simple openings we can all find, only this week I have had two cottage meetings, and a woman's meeting in the Hall here. One cottage in F . . . (no meeting as we say) some 21 present, 3 or 4 "in fellowship" as we say. This was used to bring to light 3 Belgian Christians, brother and two sisters, who once broke bread in Belgium, but have for years missed their way. They have not known where a meeting was, and tried to get on with the Wesleyans. They are delighted beyond measure to find themselves at last in touch with some gathered to Christ alone. At that same meeting a couple of young earnest men, Wesleyans, were helped, and an elderly woman exercised about her soul. The second meeting on Thursday afternoon. Two sisters longing to reach their neighbours, opened their house. Some 20 odd people there, mostly women: several unconverted, all most earnest listeners: only 4 of our number breaking bread. In these meetings we have had more strangers hearing the word than in any of the big halls on the Sunday nights.

I think our young brethren who crave the bigger ready-made audiences in the mission halls and Open-Brethren rooms have no idea of the sweetness of carving out their own work under God. On Monday, we are trying a bigger house meeting here. Just writing out on simple correspondence cards a personal invitation, to be handed at each door around us.

I only refer to these details to show there is no dearth of work: and that while we reach many new souls in this way, there is in such service no going ourselves, nor leading of our brethren away, from the Divine Centre, nor into the looseness which is the bane of our time.

To those young men who can club together and take an independent Hall, what opening for vigorous and clean work! To those who have heart and physique for open air work, what a glorious country this! To such as have tact and grit, what might not be done in house to house work, getting in for a verse or two and prayer where possible, in addition to giving the printed gospel!

Jan. 13 1922.

At a time when assemblies were walking in the truth, and had inspired apostles to guide them — themselves the vessels of the Holy Spirit, and voicing His mind Who (though apostles have gone) has not left the saints, nor changed His mind — there were nevertheless individuals in their midst whose carnal nature took liberties, and who thought that liberty meant license.

I hope it will not be interpreted by saints in S . . . as going beyond brotherly love, if their attention is called to 1 Thess. v. 14, and 2 Thess. iii. 6. In the 1st Epistle, the Spirit gives exhortation to admonish; in the second, He gives command

to withdraw from an unruly brother, though even in the latter case recognising the Divine link which exists, and which cannot be destroyed by government or discipline. I should suppose that in the first instance, the Thessalonian saints would through some weighty mouthpiece convey their sense to the brother that his conduct was inconsistent with the position they occupied as representing the house of God, and with the truth of the Name to which they stood committed; and in the second instance, failing of exercise, or repentance, or recovery in the brother concerned, to make it plain that in the maintenance of the truth of Christ, and the holiness of the house of God, they were — while recognising that he did not cease to be a brother, even if a brother under discipline — unable to continue in outward association with him.

This is not inconsistent with Divine Love which is Holy love, nor with edification and blessing to saints; for in the first instance it is preceded by the verse, "Wherefore encourage one another and build up each one the other, even as ye also do" (1 Thess. v. 11); and in the second instance by the verse, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ." (2 Thess. iii. 8).

I fear that on the plea of patience and forbearance the local company may encourage the working of a leaven in its midst which will be destructive of true enlargement; while on the other hand, if they act upon the word of God, their own hearts will be confirmed in the truth, others may be delivered, and the hands of all who seek to build the wall strengthened.

17th February 1922.

It has often affected me to think that while Cyrus' decree was addressed to "Whosoever will" among the scattered Israelites, probably numbering hundreds of thousands, only some 50,000 entered the "open door" and returned. Yet of these how few really had the interests of the house at heart, and soon turned the providential favour of Jehovah into an occasion to feather their own nests and to dwell in their own ceiled houses. Not content with rough shelter while the house was built, they spent time in embellishing their own dwellings — elaborating ceilings for themselves — while the slightest opposition made them drop the work of the Lord's house. By Malachi's time there was only a remnant within the remnant who had any heart to the interests of Jehovah. So easy is it for a movement to promise well in its beginnings and then to lose its momentum as time goes on. Factions came in among the returned Jews, corruption and hypocrisy mingled with them even though on the Divine ground outwardly and not scattered among the nations as the other Jews and Israelites; and the handful who were truly separate in heart could but wait for the promised advent of the Messiah. How truly they kept to this last their affection for the house shows (Luke ii.).

I daresay it may be with those who are outwardly separate from systems; the majority keen on their factions, but individuals who sigh and cry and are truly exercised becoming more and more known to each other by their common affection for the Lord and their common interest in that which is the known centre of His interest here. As we do not read of any organisation in Luke of these faithful hearts, so that they could be looked upon as a separate party, so, will it not be

possible for individuals to cultivate nearness to the Lord, and thus be near to each other: not on the lines of an organised community which has always failed, but of spiritual communion with the purpose of God? It is remarkable how prominent and frequent became the visits of the Holy Ghost in those days and to those people. I conceive that the ever dwelling Spirit of God may give us very much in the way of cheer and enlightenment, the general sad condition notwithstanding.

Referring to the Body and the House, have we not — in thinking of the Body of Christ, to look at Christians solely in the light of God's work in them? I as a man, a Christian, have the flesh in me: so have you: so has each believer. I as a son, born of God, in the Spirit, not in the flesh, can in my mind detach from myself the flesh that is in me (for it is in me in fact), because God having judged it, and severed my connection with it in His mind, teaches me so to view it in communion with Him. Hence, as God has a way of looking at me apart from the flesh that is in me, seeing only what is His own work by His Spirit, so am I privileged to take account of myself in the same way. It is in this light only that we can speak of membership in the body; nothing finds place in any way in the body of Christ but what is of Christ, of God. There is no such thing imaginable in the body as failure or flesh. I speak of His mystical body of course, formed here on earth in His absence by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and comprised of every Christian so viewed. In this you have the holy nature, the moral nature of God, 1 Corinthians xiii., you have spiritual manifestations and exercises, chapter xii., and you have the character of the heavenly One wrought out in heavenly ones, chapter xv. See 2 Corinthians xiii. 14. Perhaps few of us understand really the Body of Christ. In it God produces all the features of Christ: every member without exception being a necessary component part of the whole, in one being exhibited prominently some part of His character and life, in another more prominently some other trait: some by active energies, some the passive and so on. Thus to get the true idea of the body we have to be rather abstract and to see each other only in the light of God's work in us.

But with reference to the House, are not persons more in view as we see them? Is it not a circle where whole persons are professedly in subjection to God, and to Christ as Son over His house? Hence outward walk, speech, actions, associations, are all necessarily brought under view; and here our bodies, our business, our relationships, our ways, all become indices to the control that has come into our lives. Saints in this character would be viewed not in an abstract way, but as God's testimony in the world, the Pillar and the Base of truth — conspicuous as a pillar, and immovable as a base. Where in order, the saints collectively would have set forth by their ministry and their manners how blessed a thing it is to be under the control of God, really exhibiting the good pleasure of God, what is suitable to Him, in this world: but where in disorder, giving a false impression of God to the world and hence becoming the first thing to be judged because of its unfaithfulness and misrepresentation of Him. Its conspicuous public failure does not mean that we cannot learn what God originally intended: and in proportion as we learn His design do we feel the gravity of the departure from it? But each may learn for himself what is suitable to God according to His original intention, be obedient to the truth personally, and separate from much of the confusion which man has brought in by his interference with God's order.

April 3rd 1922.

... It is so easy to quote Scripture principles which you are bound to accept, when the thing supported under cover of the quotations is too palpably wrong to overlook.

April 29 1922.

... I return R letter. Sometimes one feels the need of patience in going through these specious documents. On his first page he confounds a testimony going out "all-Israel-wards" with fellowship with all Israel. When we break bread intelligently we have all Christians in view, for "we being many are one loaf and one body." When we give lectures or give Bible Readings we have all Christians in view, for all are Christ's brethren in title and as before God. But to say that we are to have fellowship with all, that James had fellowship with all the twelve tribes of Israel whatever their condition, (Or Elijah in his day), is to reduce to absurdity the whole testimony of God. It was just because Israel was not in a state for fellowship that the testimony to the truth of God's thoughts was so needed and so remarkable.

May 29 1922.

... The crucial point about Christianity is its dating from the resurrection of Christ, and therefore lying outside every resource of man, or man's research. Our whole position and relationship in association with Christ, according to the Father's will, can be understood and enjoyed only by the Spirit of Christ. Our calling is apprehended as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to travel up to the point where God has placed the risen One, and to hear what He has to say of His plans in connection with Christ. Our worship, our communion, our service, can be intelligent only in proportion to our adoption of that which God has established in resurrection. The whole design of the church's stay on earth is the reproduction on earth of her living Head in His absence, and during the period of God's longsuffering toward the world. She is formed and nourished, instructed and empowered, only from above, outside of the world-system, absolutely independent of the man whose energies terminate in that death out of which believers have been raised.

More than half of our difficulties are caused by the hankering after some system or method which will be tangible and visible on earth, and which will work automatically and uniformly like a well drilled regiment obeying a word of command. This I conceive to have been the case in 1908. But it is not the church of God in principle. There is no substitute in the church of God for spiritual judgment formed by the truth, and practised in the spirit of Christ. If people are not up to the truth they are not. If people are not enlightened as to the true Christian calling and relationships, they will not act according to the relationships and calling. The only way to help souls is to bring Christ before them, praying that the Spirit may work a response to Him in their hearts. I have so often in late years felt that we are not instructed. It is hopeless to expect that saints should be formed by truth which they rarely, perhaps never, hear. It is becoming increasingly nauseous to hear

language frequently used in meetings, which might justly have been employed 50 years ago, as to brethren being especially favoured and enlightened, desiring to carry the gospel to the poor sects who are hungry for it, etc., etc., when really the bits of preaching we do hear are often utterly shallow, and you would hear the same themes preached in a more solid and thoughtful way by many of the men in these poor sects. We have to do with a state of things when most of us are only artificially, very artificially, "in fellowship". Some owe it to parentage, few to exercise of any depth. Apart from instruction, they have not the truth which would induce exercise and separation. And only separate men can preach separating truth in power.

I think that out of all the confusion there is coming out more clearly the helpful bearing of 2 Timothy ii. 22, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Exercised for yourself before the Lord, your general course is to be identified with the remnant position in which the providence of God has placed you, in separation from the systems of men, and apart from those companies which you are bound to think have been formed by the will of man acting in neglect of the Headship of Christ; and as to your course in detail, serving every saint whom you can reach without compromise, in the bowels of Jesus Christ. I long to commune in conversation with every saint, if the theme shall be Christ, but not to let that communion induce a compromise of that which the Lord in faithful patience has made precious to my soul. Where my brother is mixed up with things which God teaches me to fast from, I have to stand aloof. It hurts me to have to do it, but it is impossible to keep a pure heart in impure links. There will be a steady narrowing up of the path; but there will be a very true joy in finding out those individuals who also call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is not ours to strive, but we are enjoined to instruct in meekness those who set themselves in opposition. I would reach every Christian if I could, I would Preach the way of salvation to every sinner if I could; but inasmuch as my Lord has called me for His name's sake into a path where my opportunities are greatly restricted if loyal to Him, He will know how to estimate the limitations His own will has placed upon me.

In actual fact it may come to a loyal minister of the word having to decline to serve where he feels that saints are commonly associated with what he feels unable to link himself. If there is exercise, and a chance of helping, he would go to help; but where a mode or a course be adopted which is not distinctively Christian in character, and in keeping with the path into which the Lord has called him, he must remember his clear directions to follow . . . with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

July 1st, 1922.

. . . Have we come to Ezekiel xxii. 17-31, where prophets (25), priests (26), princes (27), people (29) are all implicated, and the Lord looks in vain for a man to stand in the breach to save the whole thing from destruction? The comfort is that all the Lord's dealings are in faithful love, and even if He puts us into the fire it is to purge the dross away.

July 21, 1922.

... As separated we have all the original principles to guide us: but if you attempt to apply the original principles to the confusion and corruption itself, you only make confusion worse confounded.

... While Corinth was addressed as a local assembly, it was not to be dissociated in either the instruction given, nor in the Lord's administration of that instruction (1 Cor.i.2) from every other assembly under the sun. Again and again in the epistle itself does the Spirit through the Assembly-Apostle direct that what He says to Corinth he says to all, (ch.iv.17: v.3 absent in body); vii.17; xi.16; xiv.33). So also in the Revelation, what the Lord says to John as to these local assemblies is expressly applied by the Spirit to every other assembly (ii. 7, 11, 29: iii. 6, 13, 22).

... The broad instructions are given by the Lord through the Spirit to all alike; and while details are not prescribed yet we can all appreciate whether or no a servant is acting in accordance with general instructions. Take 2 Samuel xviii. 5, 12-15 for illustration. Quite apart from the merits in the case, here are instructions given in everybody's hearing to certain servants. One of these latter, ignoring the Master's wishes, blames another man for not doing what (in his wilfulness) he felt free to do; and then, plainly contravening the Master's orders, considers that he has "liberty" as a free lance to go where he likes and do what he likes. It was "free-lance-ism" that day, as it is to-day; but it brought a very great grief to the Master's heart, and in its train a good deal more beside. Perhaps Joab is one of the best examples in Scripture of the free lance — a capable servant, yet doing hurt to the king's heart at almost every crisis in David's history; and eventually closing his life under a melancholy cloud as identified with the wrong company in Israel.

Your quotation of 1 Corinthians viii., ix. and x., upholding the "liberty" of the servant, yet indicating that under the plea of liberty we may neither damage another's conscience, convert liberty into license for ourselves, nor infringe upon the principles that are implied in Christian fellowship, was entirely sufficient to have helped Mr.G if he were willing to be helped.

... I feel a distinct drawing in in regard to one's range of service. One still has "all men" in view, and "all saints," but the exigencies of association into which some individuals, and some gatherings would force us seem to demand a more decided challenge; and I am afraid I can no longer go to some.

August 15th, 1922.

... We don't seek division of course; but it is those who want to force on us loose principles which are contrary to the character of the house of God who are working towards it.

December 20th, 1922.

... It is possible that the processes of confederation and unification in religion

may develop materially and seriously, and that all who profess to be separated to Christ now may find themselves in a position analogous to that of the non-union man in the labour world. This would tend to emphasize what we have in common, and perhaps would admit of our finding a fellowship in ostracism and suffering which at present we do not seem able to discover in the truth alone. But will it produce that humbling under the mighty hand of God that is so desirable?

March 16th, 1923.

... There is a great desire to show patience as long as patience may be shown, looking to the Lord to recover those who err and grieve their brethren. It is quite possible that this forbearance may be interpreted by animadversion as condoning the offence; and truly there are limits which in one or two cases appear to have been long passed. I believe some local assemblies ought to have taken action long ago as to individuals who go out from their midst and come back to them, having openly flouted all principles of fellowship. But broadly speaking, and making allowance for the patience referred to, I find there is exercise and desire to be consistent with the position God has given to us. We are frightfully weak and we have need of instruction; and young souls come in who have not been carefully taught the truth of Christ nor the character of the path we tread in the fallen state of Christendom. Can the independent position taken by B . . . and B . . . , and a few others be charged upon us as characterising us? Or is it not the case that, few as we are, the majority are broken-hearted, or at least distressed and taken aback at their course?

January 12th, 1924.

... I have often lain awake at night crying to and calling upon the Name of the Lord. I see that He tolerated the storm for his tired disciples in order to give faith's opportunity to share His superiority over wind and wave. And when only one in twelve had in spirit assimilated the lesson, and had in spirit detached himself from every human hope and confidence, looking only to the Lord, and experiencing His faithfulness even when that confidence seemed to be shaken, — the Lord went back with him to the poor old storm-tossed boat and the rocking disciples, and immediately the storm ceased.

Does it not awaken the hope that if we in spirit detach ourselves from every thought of human resource and learn our lesson of looking to Him alone — though we be but as one in twelve — He may still the storm that is raging round our little bark?

February 20th, 1924.

... Receiving every Christian without demur whatever be the corruption or departure of that with which he habitually connects himself is not endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. As the corruption becomes more terrible the risk becomes the more serious, and the need the greater

for "laying hands suddenly on no man;" but if E . . . thinks that the church is an hotel, instead of its being the House of God, he is mistaken.

April 28th, 1924.

. . . What we need to remember is that the latter stages of our sojourn here have been foreknown by the Holy Ghost, and He has given instruction in the Scriptures inspired for the purpose to guide us to the very last day of our stay. We have first the normal truth of Christianity – all displayed in Christ, the risen Man Who is Son of God, and requiring its counterpart and expression in the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; and we have next the conditions of failure and departure which would intensify as the age developed and the end drew near, and which would necessitate action and a related path, above and beyond what is normal. . . . The practice of most open brethren is to receive all Christians as though things were normal, and to ignore all care as to the associations (in the corrupted state of things around) of which we are warned in the scriptures which refer to these days.

August 22nd, 1924.

. . . We have our difficulties in England. Perhaps they will increase; perhaps as we continue to cry to God they may diminish. I have thought that there is a little reaction against extremists who were trying to run us on the rocks. Perhaps one is mistaken. Yet why should we not see a little staying of the looseness when we have prayed about it; and if often inarticulate in our distress – almost smitten into dumbness before our God, – yet have looked to Him alone? Why should He not deliver us from those who tend to divert us from our calling on high, and to pervert us from the path of testimony to Christ to-day.

But were the difficulties to increase tenfold, shall we find any direction better than this in which to look – to Christ Himself? Ezekiel in Chebar, Daniel in Babylon, John in Patmos, Paul at Lystra – how near these men were to heaven, to glory, to Christ, in the times of break up, of persecution, of scattering. We may be granted all the greater knowledge of the Son of God, and visions of His glory, for the deprivation of those circumstances of outer support. We have not numbers, we have little gift calculated to help us in this matter, but at least, and even if an afflicted and poor people (Zeph) let us see to it that we call on the Name of the Lord.

. . . The ship is broken in pieces, and some are sure that the plank they are on, or the bit of timber they are making for, is the only "right" bit. May our poor hearts value the Lord more and more Whose pity and mercy (Jude) assures us of all reaching the land safely! Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

December 31st, 1929.

... Our great weakness in the way of ministry seems to be on the lines of growth in the truth. Instruction in the fundamentals of Christianity is very distinctly objective. E.C. sometime wrote to me "Any clown can look at a picture." It is easy to have an outline of dogma. But the process of assimilation is different. A dog can bolt almost any amount of food. But it is the sheep that chews the cud. I lay awake a bit last night thinking of Christ written on the fleshy tables of the heart by the Spirit of the living God. It opened up somewhat, for one can see that the Spirit is here to write in indelible characters every line of Christ, of all that is true in Christ, in the very centre of our being, the heart. It is a physiological fact that the heart lies in a sort of midway position between the brain and the feet. If Christ be written in the heart, there will be sound intelligence in the head and a strong and careful walk on the feet. Every epistle in its presentation of the objective truth in Christ is to be subjectively wrought in saints so that it can really be said "which thing is true in Him and in you."

You will be interested to know that it is forty years ago to-day since I quitted business. It was an exceedingly real thing to me at the time, and the stepping out of Peter from the boat on to the water was the unquestionable experience of one's own soul. For I knew nobody and had nothing. But my hope was in God. Looking back over this period, one is candidly conscious that not man but God was my hope; and that the Lord of all servants laid Congo before me as His will. It was no mere missionary craze, or with a desire of creating a missionary movement: simply that I personally was under orders to go.

So that with all lowliness of heart one can bear testimony to the faithfulness of God. As to that part of the earth it remains in one's heart, and as you will know has still a large place in one's labours. But the same voice that commanded the Congo now, in as clear a way, commands home service; poor, poor, poor, as one knows that service must be on my part. It is joy to know that God sustains and cares for the dear Congo workers now toiling and suffering there, as also for such as He appoints to minister among His people here.

For thirty out of the forty years my loved wife has shared in this faithfulness of God. Few know what she has suffered, few know how much she was beloved by the natives of her day. And no one on earth can quite understand what she has been to me.

What may yet remain of the path He has marked out is wisely hidden. But the one who so lovingly spoke of "my Lord" as object in Phil. iii, can confidently speak of "my God" as resource in Phil. iv.

January 30th, 1932.

... Conditions are always arising in which the saint loyal to Christ has to withdraw himself from this one or that one because of inconsistency with the full Christian calling... Many things are to be borne within the area of outward fellowship, from which one shrinks in the way of personal contact. I remember

being asked if I were breaking bread with a person, did I not commit myself to all that he did? My reply was, "Certainly not". And the ground of my reply is the whole teaching of the Pauline Epistles, for without touching on the question of Church fellowship, and still less insisting on expulsion from it, the Apostle shows up instance after instance where saints are to be rebuked sharply, corrected from error, even withdrawn from as disorderly, — yet not counted for enemies, but admonished as brothers. Unruly ones are to be warned, and so on. You do not commit yourself to these features of flesh seen in saints; yet the teaching of Scripture does not point to the putting outside the pale by excommunication.

. . . In days of brokenness we may not alter God's standards, nor may we depart from God's ways. Where, in the apostle's days, a matter demanded expulsion from church fellowship it is demanded today; where in those days the lesser discipline was required, it is also required to-day. God is the same, Christ is the same, the Holy Ghost is the same, and the word is the same. Wolves have come in not sparing the flock, perverse things are said by evil men within the Christian profession, but "I commend you to God and to the word of His grace" secures both edification, and part amongst those separated to holy uses according to God's purpose. We are oftentimes in danger of following precedents or of establishing an unwritten law that makes the word of God of none effect. The last three verses of 2 Timothy ii., are oftentimes forgotten by saints who greatly stress verse 22. Gentle, meek, forbearing, aptitude in teaching:— even though repentance be required for the acknowledgement of the truth, and for deliverance from snares by Divine awakening. This is a phase of service for a separate bondman of the Lord, separate and meet for the Master's use, even before there was any breach at all; i.e. in Timothy's day.

February 25th, 1932.

. . . These are days when exercises flow in upon saints from many directions, and the servant of the Lord sometimes becomes a depository of a dozen exercises beside his own. But the Master is an unfailing Resource and of His fulness there is no end. It is good experience to have other's cares brought into our lives, for it affords opportunity to discover His adaptability to every form of test and trial, as well as His sympathy under every pressure. It is on the whole surprising to see how little saints know how to use the faithfulness of our Lord when difficulty presses.

February 2nd, 1935.

. . . It is joy to think that some still are held by the truth, so hardly won for us by our fathers, — truth that separated them from the organised religion around us, to realise the unlimited Resource there is for separated saints in Christ Jesus our Head, — and truth that is still communicated to us by ministry, though little sought after or cared for by the majority of Christians.

I earnestly hope that those who do surely want to serve the Lord, may be willing to purify themselves from the links and formations devised by man, though professedly organised to further the work of God. I am sure that some do not

realise the damaging effect in the church at large of alliances which are created by professing Christians, to achieve God's purposes. For it is as though they should say, "We know that in Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, and that the Holy Ghost is here to be the alone power by which God's purpose is achieved;" but they think we can supplement God's ordering and God's way by joining hands together in some of the organised movements found in a judged religious system.

HIS PRIESTHOOD

O Son of God eternal,
Jesus — in glory now;
Before Thy throne of mercy
Behold! a sufferer bow.

Thine eyes of tenderest pity,
Thy heart of strongest love,
Thy pierced hands of power,
All move for me above.

Upon Thy face, Lord Jesus,
My soul would fix its gaze;
Such love as Thine inviting
Its rest in Thy blest ways.

These marks of earthly trials
Of loneliness and pain,
Oft touched Thy holy Person,
And touch Thy heart again.

Yes, there in brightest glory,
One Person lives for me,
Who tasted all this sorrow
And — death upon the tree.

From out this house of weakness
In spirit I'll away;
Affections mighty pinions
Cleaving their upward way.

The body in its suffering
Shall not enchain the heart;
Love finds its happy solace
Where Thou, Lord Jesus, art.

And at Thy feet adoring,
High Priest of God's own choice,
I'll fold my wings untiring,
And in my heart rejoice.

For here in deep communion
With God revealed in Son,
And saints who also love Him,
We bow before His throne.

Thou, Lord, dost lead our singing,
(Thy suffering all behind)
And we in Spirit with Thee,
Repose in wordship find.

W. H. W.