

## Marks whereby the Assembly of God and the Table of the Lord were and are to be known.

"Selections from the Writings and Ministry of G. V. Wigram."

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To Mr. J. G. Deck, Motueka, Nelson, N.Z.

My Dear Brother,

Our Lord searched the heart of Peter (in John 21: 15-17) with three questions, which brought up to Peter's mind the *roots* of his failure, rather than the overt act of denial. And He graciously closed up each probing with a word of comfort: Feed my lambs (v. 15); Shepherd my sheep (v. 16); Feed my sheep (v. 17); thus breaking the self-confidence of His servant, both in himself and man, ere He confided the sheep and lambs of Israel to his care. Then He adds, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (v. 18). What a Lord He is, and how admirable in all His ways! Many of us, too, when young, thought of "what we would do for Him," and we, too, have had to learn that *the* happier question is, "What will He do with us?" You will, I am sure, go along with an aged pilgrim in admiration of this wisdom and these ways of our common Lord and Master. He did not turn Peter off and send him away as a failed hireling, but used the failure as a means of fitting him for a more important service and place; and He would not accept Peter's rejection of the crown of martyrdom, but would take His own way of putting that honour upon him; no praise to Peter. Counting that, as an aged one, on reviewing your course from England, through India, England, and hither, you must have made your experiences (in a long residence here, too) as I have mine in other scenes, I have selected you as one to whom, in grace and love, I may fairly address a few thoughts connected with the work of the Lord in New Zealand. I will only add that, in doing so, I desire to remember, and myself to act upon the Lord's own words to Peter, "Follow me" (v. 19), and "Follow *thou* me" (v. 22).

There are, as men speak, very many *gatherings* in New Zealand to break bread and drink wine together, weekly and professedly, in memory of Christ and of His death until He comes (1 Cor. 11: 17-33). To interfere in the house and at the table of any one would be wrong for me and unlovely. And who, or what am I to venture to dictate at the Lord's table? I would be aware of so doing; the Lord keep me from it. But my place is, at what is His table, as a guest; and if in any measure I can guard others from sinning at it, or, in my little measure, after the line of Paul's conduct, can stay the Lord's hand from sending weakness and infirmity upon many, and cutting a good many off in discipline, by arousing the attention of the guests to any existing cause for His discipline, I would desire to do so humbly, but freely. The Lord was indeed in discipline cutting off many, that they might not be condemned with the world (v. 30-32), and Paul knew it ere he wrote his first letter, calling attention to sins, and among them to the awful one named in 1 Cor. 5.

I would, also, as one desiring to find grace to be faithful, warn the simple ones as to what are the marks of His table; and so, also, arouse the attention of some who assume their table to be His, while there is still cause to question its being so. And, indeed, God is the God of reality, and, if I and others go to a table and call it "the table of the Lord," we should expect that He will make manifest to all what it really is in His sight, whether it is His table, or whether it is not, and so, I think, He is wont to do; as well as, if it be His, to make all that is at it manifest, for He is light and is present there.

And now, firstly, there is an expression connected with our being together *in His name*, which is important as connected with His assembly, and is if understood, helpful to us. It occurs in Matt. 18: 18, 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The gospel of Matthew gives us the history of our Lord's life here below, when looked at as Son of David (securer of the sure mercies of David) and Son of Abraham (father of the faithful, having promises for earth and heaven). Himself, the heir and alone holder of all promised blessings and the object of faith, was to have a kingdom and a church also. And it is by reason of this, as I judge, that the church, or assembly, is brought out here as in none of the other gospels. See Matt. 16: 13-28 and Matt. 18: 15-20. The word "church" never occurs in the gospels, save in these two contexts; the word occurs here, though the church was not set up until Pentecost. Now, in the second of the passages the words I have cited are found, "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name* there am I in the midst of them." In v. 15-17 we learn how a private injury of one individual brother against another is to be met: Christ gone to heaven, there could be an appeal to the church, which would have responsibility and authority (not infallibility, but authority,) heaven-sustained, v. 18; then v. 19 a promise as to prayer; and after that v. 20. To me it is clear that this last verse contains the strength and limits of the whole and that which qualifies it: it must be in His *name*, whether the gathering together or the prayer. And here I must remark that the term "*name*" in Scripture, as applied to God and the Lord Jesus Christ in their various titles, is not merely a conventional sound without meaning. The *name* of "God" (Elohim) had its illustration, as first recorded in the pages of Scripture, in the first chapter of Genesis. Creation made manifest and stood forth as witness of the eternal power and Godhead of the incorruptible Elohim (Rom. 1: 20.) The second chapter brought out to light another part of His glory, viz., as "Jehovah" — God, in His provision for and association with man in Eden. The meaning of the word *Jesus* is "Jehovah-a-saving" (compare Matt. 1: 21); He was *made* Lord (Acts 2: 36, and Phil. 2: 9-11) and Christ (Acts 2: 36), "Anointed," with a glory as such in heaven, even as He is to have a glory as "Anointed" on earth, under His Hebrew name of Messiah (John 1: 41). And what is the manifestation, now, from the throne of God and heaven of the Nazarene, once crucified, now ascended and seated on the throne under these titles, "Jehovah-a-saving for heaven, Lord of all things, the Anointed Son of Man?" This is His *name*, and those who come unto Him and shelter there, find every need met. A company being, in whatever humble measure, in the liberty and life-giving power of this manifestation which God has made by Jesus, and is ours through faith and the Holy Spirit, is a very different truth (for truth it is) from man's thoughts, when, from whatever motive, he merely spreads a table and sits down at it with others on the first day of the week. I judge we should *all* do well to stand under the light of these rays shining down upon us from the newly announced name (or manifestation) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is a flood of blessed light, making all manifest, and of love telling itself out as none but God, who is love, can tell it; and the people into whom it shines know the hallowing effect of it on themselves as to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Secondly. Before coming to certain *tests* of the table and company at it, which the scriptures give, and in the very nature of things, suppose (or take for granted): tests, therefore, which they who accredit it as the Lord's table in any place, are bound, by their allegiance to their Master and as His friends met to remember Him, to look for — let me say a little word as to what they (the guests) are supposed to be.

Does it not *suppose*, as being given to disciples (who were first called Christians at Antioch), that the guests at it are a people who have been separated unto Himself in heaven (John 17: 19) from out of the world, as not of it even as He was not of it (v. 15)? His death stands between them and the world and worldliness as the Red Sea divided between Israel in the wilderness and Egypt, the house of bondage and land of captivity. He who dwells in them now is the spring and regulator of their life here

below, as the flesh once was. And now, instead of being deluded by Satan and led down to destruction by him, body, soul, and spirit, they know and have been owned by Jesus, the mighty conqueror of Satan as His own, and they have found in Him, risen from death and the grave and glorified, an object of joy and rejoicing. They sing *His* victory and enter with joy into *His* having triumphed gloriously and anticipate the songs of *His* triumph and the rejoicings of that day. One man has been found who has done nothing amiss; and He has won, by His lowly and perfect obedience unto God, a place from God, a place and glory which He has opened unto them. His complete self-surrender when here below, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God" (the whole of that will, and nothing but it); and the beauty of His ways and thoughts and the marvellous moral display He has made of His Father and God have laid hold of their hearts and (forgetting all that is behind and looking forward to meet Him), they live to Him and Him alone. Dust of this earth they think not to collect as their portion; the old selfishness of flesh they have judged; Satan they resist, knowing that he will soon be bruised under their feet. The supper is a feast in the wilderness pilgrimage of life. in the entering into the land and amid the wars thereof — but they at it are the church militant and are fighting, through grace, the good fight of faith. Many a fall and many a wound they each may have had, and yet they can sing "In all things more than conquerors through him that loved us." Is it not so, beloved? The church is the house of God, the body of Christ, and serves as exhibited down here, for the nursery, the schoolroom, the guardroom, the hospital of God's own heavenly people. But it is only for those who on credible testimony can be received at first as already His. And here, observe, that (in Scripture) the seeker and the inquirer were not as such called Christians. The saved were those who could take their places in the company that owned the apostle's doctrine and fellowship (Acts 2: 42); and they were of one heart and of one soul (Acts 4: 32) through the presence and power of the Spirit.

Christ never forgets His Father's choice of us, nor His own call, nor the faith and purpose of the Spirit in us — even in the days when we were not self-judged; as we should have been, surely. He is the alone faithful and true One, and His ways change not. He has, too, for you and for me, little as we may be, tokens of His love and good pleasure just suited to our littleness and low estate.

Thirdly, there are the habits and ways of His people and assembly down here, to which attention will have to be called if we come to trace the way back to their original position of those who have wandered from it. These I leave for the present, and turn to

### **Marks whereby the Assembly of God was and is to be known.**

It is the assembly called out of this world; one and holy.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven was what Peter preached at Pentecost when he called on those that believed: "As many as the Lord our God shall call. . . . Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2: 39, 40). The apostle's doctrine and practice and fellowship were clean outside of Judaism (v. 41). The church was *formed* through faith upon Christ gone up out of this earth into heaven and made Lord and Christ there on the throne; it was thoroughly worthy of Him as being there, and had been formed and was sustained by the Holy Spirit come down to dwell on earth among poor sinners who believed in the Messiah martyred and rejected, as now alive and on the throne in heaven — the fountain of all grace. Paul was called out of all earthly and worldly blessings by a Lord gone into heaven; and he called people to go out to Jesus the crucified and ascended (Heb. 13: 12, 13, and Gal. 1: 4 and 6: 14); it presents one body and one Spirit, and it is holy in principle and practice, sanctified to God.

As to the one body and one Spirit: a few remarks may suffice to show how far the one body and

one Spirit are essential characteristics of the church or company called out of earth for heavenly places and blessings, even as Israel and saints before had been called out of idolatry for earthly places and earthly blessings. A king is yet to reign upon earth centre of government and worship on God's behalf. A king supposes both a kingdom and "subjects." The king is the higher party of the two; the "subjects" are the people who are blessed by relationship with him, *members of his kingdom*; not members of the king. The word "subject," not "member," answers to the word king in the official relationship of king and people in a kingdom. On the other hand no Englishman would say, speaking of a human body, "the head and its subjects," but the head and *its members*. A human body has but one head; and many "*members*" are required to make up the complement of the body. Our Lord Jesus Christ has had all things put under His feet (Eph. 1: 22, 23), and has been given to be Head over them to His assembly; but then, likewise (and the truth is distinct from that of His being Head over all things in the sense of His causing all things to work together for our good), He is Head of His body, which is the fulness (or complement) of Him that filleth all in all. May [we] grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ from whom the whole body 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 (Eph. 4: 15, 16, comp. 1 Cor. 12: 7-27). There is but one such Head, but one such Body.

It is not that there is but one Spirit in this one body, which is all that we need to remember. He is God, a person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, who has wrought in creation, in providence, in government, who now, in eternal salvation and redemption, takes a new place and comes down to dwell in the body the church; the alone power that ought to work in it too. The apostles had to wait for Him as the promise of the Father, Acts 1: 4, 5, 8. In Acts 2 He came down and made their company to be the church, and gave out a bold testimony for the Lord on the throne on high, forming a company and a teaching and a fellowship and practice which were new. Note the word Spirit through v. 4, 17, 18. This he continues in Acts 3 and Acts 4, adding certain things, however. In Acts 5 He is the power of discipline inside the assembly and putting Peter forward (v. 3, 9, 32), making the place a terror to the unrepentant. In 6 He shows Himself as the One, fulness of whom would fit a man for diaconal care, or for the work of an evangelist (Acts 6: 3, 5, 8; Acts 7: 51, 55); leading on to (7) Stephen's becoming, through Him, an adequate testimony against Israel; that, as they had rejected a Christ in humiliation upon earth, so they rejected Him now in glory, and giver of forgiveness of sins and of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8, when the twelve apostles, under the first persecution of the church, tarried in Jerusalem. He used those that were scattered abroad to go everywhere through Judea, and Samaria preaching the word. He was with them, and v. 17-23 met new difficulties. Read, too, Acts 9, Saul's conversion, and mark v. 17, 31 — (compare Acts 13: 2, 4, 9, 52, etc.). I will not write more, but I commend the careful reading of the Acts, as showing how the presence of God, the, Holy Spirit, and His using men, and working by men, is stamped in divine grace upon every part of the narrative.

Fourthly. Ere I come to holiness, I would say a few words on the church as a depository of the Scriptures, and so, of truth. Isaiah 8 gives us part of the trial of Israel; and there we read of the word being sealed up among His (Immanuel's) *disciples*;" v. 12 to 20 are very important, and apply to Pentecostal times, as also, to the hour yet to come to the remnant. The term "*disciples*" is a name new, and marks a relationship new to the Jewish mind as a line of blessing. The old line of blessing to them was that of lineal descent from Abram. The one new was, "You have His word." This is more developed in John 15 than in 16, where their relationship in the Spirit is given. Study John 17 and Rom. 11: 12-24, as giving very different connections of the same truth about the word of God, and in His people down here. Also John 14, Acts 20: 32, 2 Tim. 3: 14-17, etc., and 1 Tim. 3: 16.

*The Lord Jesus Christ* in the revelation of God and the Father. Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1: 15); the image of God (2 Cor. 4: 4); in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2: 9); the man that is Jehovah's Fellow (Zech. 13: 7 and 11: 12, 13). He that has seen me has seen the Father also (John 14: 9; read from v. 6 to 20, and John 1: 18).

*The written word* is the place where alone all about Him can be found by those that are taught of God (John 5: 37-47, and John 6: 45).

The scriptures may be said then to be, in a certain sense, God's letter to the assembly; and believers and the assembly are responsible to be His letter to the world.

Fifthly. The assembly is responsible by privilege and calling to be holy.

For our sakes the Lord has sanctified (or set apart) Himself on the throne on high, that we may be set apart (sanctified) by the Father through the truth (John 17: 17, 18, 19). He is, as it were, the vow of our Nazariteship. We are to be holders forth of the word of life (Phil. 2: 16). But more than this, He is there as the Head of the body, the church. If Christ is Head of the body the church, if God the Holy Spirit indwells it, is it unable to find out, to see and to judge of evil which may be in it? To be unwilling to admit sin and sins in one's own family and to tolerate it in the assembly, is to cast dishonour upon the Lord Himself; making Him out to be more indifferent about sin than we are; a very awful sin it is too. This has been done by *many*, avowedly, too, as to doctrine, morality, and spirituality; and where tolerated, and in principle adopted and sanctioned by any company, it ceases, if it perseveres in so doing, to be part of the holy catholic church. If my principles are such, the sooner I were separated from the better.

On the other hand, there may be infantine weakness and excessive ignorance in an assembly — and the more of these there be, the more would the Spirit of God and of Christ recognise there all that is of God — all that makes the company to be part of the church; and so ought I, too, to recognise it and seek to make it consistent with Christ's mind about it. But what if I find a company whose *principles* might be, 1st, the denial of the one body and one Spirit; 2ndly, the maintaining the independency of the churches; 3rdly, the setting aside of responsibility as to the truth and pleading against holy discipline in word and doctrine and walk of life. Should I accredit it? Nay, I ought to leave it as an assembly to its own principles, as antagonistic to Scripture and to mine; and (counting it neither heavenly nor divine) leave it alone. To their own master they, in it, will individually stand or fall, and I would pray for them each and all, and try to help each into a better position. But why waste time through giving them credit for being that which they are not, for being that which they disclaim? The state and condition of individuals may be very low in an assembly which owns Christ in His Headship and as Head, which owns and recognises the living God the Spirit to be with and among them; which desires to purge out all leaven that it may be an unleavened lump, etc.; in such case I own the assembly and try to keep the individuals. But if the assembly is anti-scriptural and anti-christian in *principle* as an assembly, I say the word applies to them in it, "Come out of her my people." I cannot own such assembly as God's "The Spirit and the bride say, Come," mark that which pastoral power now-a-days, should seek to bring forth among God's people down here.

I mean not, dear brother, to tax *you* for an answer to this. I publish it without your having seen or heard of it, so that you can *in no wise* be looked upon by any as responsible to repudiate or approve any part of it at all. Glad shall I be, if we do meet, for any remarks you may kindly make to me upon it, if you feel it worth while so to do.

In respect and, affection, as in God's presence, I write it,

Yours in Him,

G. V. W. Christchurch, March 14, 1874.

P.S. — Read 2 Cor. 5: 14-17; if it has hold over me, "I know no man after the flesh."

Nor human kindness, nor leaven, can be allowed in any sacrifice — they would spoil and corrupt it; but the salt of our God, in plentiful measure, will preserve.

As to one's labours among the professing world, take Jer. 15: 19, for your motto; and for those in the Gospel Rom. 1: 1-7.

## To The Christians in New Zealand.

### **Acts 11: 26.**

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Beloved of the Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ for His Father's sake (John 17: 9, 10), to you who are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1: 6), through faith, and by the Holy Spirit: Greeting.

I want you, beloved, to place yourselves with me, by faith, among the company of three thousand souls, described in Acts 2: 41-47 — the early believers on the day of Pentecost; and, again, in that of the five thousand men described in Acts 4: 32-37; and to consider how far we are *practically* what they were — so full of the Holy Spirit, and each heart so gone after the Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, so conscious of Himself there on the throne (Himself our own and our blessing), as that, selfishness laid aside by us, we are living down here as to Christ alone and for His people. If we have the same objects of faith and the same Holy Spirit as they, and yet are not like them in practice, should we not be ashamed and humble ourselves before God. If in any measure we are selfish, or earthly minded, or lying under the power of the god of this world, does not confession become us?

Come again with me to the faithful assembly at Ephesus as it was when Paul wrote his letter to it. Can you, can I, so drop into all the blessedness of the one Spirit and one body, brought out in the mystery as they held it (it is our own as well as theirs), "quickened together with Christ," "raised up together." "and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (as Paul and they saw it) and not say, But then, how short, how very short is our walk, are our lives, of what Paul (a man of like passions with ourselves) describes in Phil. 1: 19-21, as his state in most trying circumstances; and again in chapter 3: 8-16. Alas! how few now-a-days "hold the Head." The freshness and beauty of Paul's life, even to the end, ever brings "the Head" before me; the poor Ephesians afterwards "left their first love" (Rev. 2: 4); shine as they still might and did in their duties as being a candlestick.

And is my life and yours, in body, soul, and spirit, such now, down here, as that if 1 Thess. 4: 13-17 were to take place today, none of us would have a regret to be found as we are? Should we each say, "Oh, the grace that has prepared me individually for this, and that enables me now to say, "I am awaiting thee, my Lord, and am ready?" To find nothing about oneself (save a mortal body), which can not at once find its place in the light! How blessed he of whom this is true!

But further: If I place myself with you in the presence of the Christ now in heaven upon the throne (eternal lover of my soul, as one given to Him before the foundation of world) — of that anointed Man that died for me on Calvary (the only One who ever laid down His life for me, and He

the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow) — of Him who patiently watches over me above and is coming again to receive me and us to Himself, that where He is there may we be also — can I, can you, in the light brightly down-shining, say, "Lord, Thou knowest that I reckon my old self to be dead to sin and self-willed independence of God, and myself to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom.6) as having been crucified together with Him — v. 6 — having died together with Him — v. 2, 3, 5, 8, — and been buried together with Him — v. 4; — sin has not dominion over me; I live to God and God alone; all my members are devoted to Him and His service alone? And yet the power of the new nature goes far beyond this, and I am to live as one Spirit with and a member in particular of that body, the glorified head of which is on God's throne in heaven — Eph. 2. — Nothing to do down here save to serve the living and true God.

Brethren, myself a partaker of the benefit, I may well write to you thus; and you, through grace, co-partners of these things, may well read anything calculated to help you to understand better the humble unselfish path of lowly dependence and obedience, here below which become those who are in Christ Jesus, partakers of the exceeding, riches of God's grace by the Spirit. What we were in the first Adam, and what our prospect then! And the flesh is in us still, and the world around us and Satan (God's enemy and ours) watching against us hourly! And have I, have you, overcome these things, and are we practically representing Christ down here, as He represents us up there, anchor and fore-runner fixed within the veil? If not, what deep repentance and humiliation become us.

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But, beloved reader, while I would challenge my soul and yours by the questions (to be answered as individuals in God's presence), of how far we are, indeed, as those standing fast in, and practically consistent with — 1st, the mercies brought out at Pentecost, together with its blessings and company; and 2ndly, with that mystery first revealed to and exhibited by Paul, as a model man, and his company at Ephesus; and 3rdly, with the hope of 1 Thess. 4: 13-17; and 4thly, with the light which now shines down from heavens opened upon us, as in the heavenly calling and in the mystery — stop here I cannot.

Besides these things revealing God to man, permanent and abiding and eternal blessing to any individual souls that receive them and walk in them, — harbingers too of better things to come, — they have been *let slip by man* and *rejected* even by the company to whom they were entrusted.

The doctrine of Christ as preached at Pentecost, and that of the mystery — that is, the company of believers, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and Christ the Head of His body the church, have been forgotten — sinned against.

This *new* light was entrusted to men, and men have again (as alas! ever) failed; and failed past all restoration, as to the blessing lost; though God will keep his own chosen ones and let none perish who, receiving the word of His grace as individuals and trusting Him, act upon it in the obedience of faith, in spite of all failure.

"While men slept an enemy came and sowed tares" (Matt. 13: 25-30). The wheat field was *spoiled as such*, though both were allowed to grow together until the harvest. They that have failed are not the ones who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, or make that which is crooked straight. Paul foresaw and forewarned the Ephesians of their *own* coming failure in Acts 20: 28-32.

But, far more than this. Compare Paul's testimony as to Israel and the Gentiles in his day, when

looked at as the olive tree — that is, channel of testimony of grace and truth; depository of the scriptures.

Rom. 3 as to the Jew, *then* about to be set aside, as a people, (and fall, 11: 12,) and become cast away (v. 15); and those (in that day) broken off (v. 17) because of unbelief (v. 20), not spared (v. 21), on them which fell severity [or sever-ing, *i.e.*, cutting off].

1. "What advantage (superiority), then has the Jew? or what profit is there of the circumcision? Much every way: *chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*"

Read carefully Rom. 11: 11-36 and note how Paul gives the Gentiles a very secondary place throughout as v. 11-22, and then goes on, "Be not highminded but fear; (v. 21) for if God spared not the natural branches, lest he also spare not thee. (v. 22), Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity (cutting off) of God: on them which fell, cutting off (sever-ing); but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. [Protestants can hardly say that, from Pentecost to the Reformation, the Church continued in its goodness, — or why did they leave it? but if it did not — the only alternative is "to be cut off."]

And v. 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. (v. 26), And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Study also 2 Tim. 3; — and Rev. 17 and 18. But Rev. 2 and 3 give the proof of failure in the local churches — parts of the whole — and the prophecy of how things will go from bad to worse, until the Lord comes in to set up His kingdom and to put all His foes beneath His feet; also 2 Thess. 2 and 2 Peter 2 and 3 and Jude and 1 John 2: 18, 19 and 1 John 4: 1-6. The epistles of Peter, John and Jude were not addressed to any m particular, but to all believers.

One consequence of this is very striking: (2 Tim. 2: 21) it is the man only *who purges himself* from "the vessels" which are "to dishonour," who shall be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work." And (v. 22) Timothy was to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, *with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.*" Such words could *not* have been said at Pentecost, any more than Peter could have then said (3: 5) of any in the church, "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*" — "from such turn away," nor could they have been said by Paul when he wrote to the Ephesians.

Now we, beloved, not only have lost the good, so far as it was committed merely to man's keeping, — but also are in the midst of the evils of "the last perilous [lit. difficult] times" [v. 1). What was to come, has come, and we are in it. (See 2 Tim. 3; 2 Peter 2 and 3; and Jude.) If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant; but he that has the will to make out that things are bettering every day and will become better, is in imbecile dotage, or deluded in his own heart as to what he says — "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5: 3). The delusion which is spread abroad over men now is not, in some respects, worse perhaps than what was spread over the minds of men from A.D. 250 to 1520. ONLY *then* it was darkness (that might be felt, truly); but the Word of God was a closed book, wrapped up in a napkin and kept by the priests from the people whom they trod underfoot. Now on the contrary, the bible is multiplied and to be found everywhere; — knowledge too is increased. But, amid all this, men are full of — what? The development of man and his powers and his coming glory, and deny the truths written in God's word, as though they had learned from the bible at least how to sin and walk in the very ways of evil of the last days, as predicted in scriptures Among the

mass of nominal Christians Satan works as an angel of light. May the Lord awaken His own people to the evil\* all around them and to their own selves being mixed up with it. (Rev. 22: 11, 12.)

\*Man, as a creature, is in apostasy from the Creator. Awful truth! It has to be looked in the face by every individual, and must be so sooner or later. And that every one of us is, therefore, in nature lost and ruined and undone is truth which has to be swallowed and digested by each believer and confessed to God. The position, privileges, and power entrusted at Pentecost, to God's believing people, they have, as a company down here, sinned away, and the stream of wickedness is rising and rapidly flowing on to the final apostasy — rebellion and judgment of christendom. The believing christian must look this too in the face; eat of the bitter of it in God's presence, and walk on with all that do likewise, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, till He comes who now upholds his own, and in whom all blessing stands secure.

And may the time soon come when "I am the bright and morning, star" will be heard, and then "the Spirit and the Bride [Where is she now?] saying, Come," (Rev. 22: 16, 17.) and assuming the position in which she should be found.

3.

Greatly, beloved, do I long that all the Lord's people — especially that we in New Zealand — may learn and be able to give account to ourselves and God, as to the objects and motives which we are acting upon; and as to those, too, which led us into our present positions. Many, I know, came hither before they were converted, and many came as children, and many were born here. These things will affect the enquiry with each one, I grant: but even then we do well to compare our objects in life, the motives, and habits, and desires and ways, with God's standard, raised in the acts and epistles, of what the believer's should be; — and to see how far we walk as the blessed Lord walked when he was on the earth (1 John 2: 6). That is the measure for all saints to measure themselves withal. And wheresoever there have been changes for the which we are responsible, as from England to New Zealand, or to Australia or Tasmania, and thence hither; or from one province or part of a province to another, how far have human mind and will, how far as the thought of bettering ourselves in life and circumstances taken a place in the movement? And how far can we say: *the Lord was first in the movement?* He moved and we moved, consciously in obedience, after Him.

Unbending decision, or pusillanimous fickleness are of the flesh, — they live and act in the material world, and aim at self-exaltation, or self-preservation. Dependent obedience upon God, faith in Christ, and the guidance of the Spirit, give both humble firmness and meekness, like Christ's. These things lead heart and mind above, and forward to glory, in self-denying devotedness and in the patience of hope.

I have been much struck with the confessions of many in this hemisphere, when giving me the details of their past days and experience. Many have said that had they taken up their case soberly and earnestly before the Lord, *ere* they left the first spot, they would not have been where they are. Many, too, have confessed how on their arrival they did not seek the guidance of His eye, and so had to be held in with bit and bridle like the horse and the mule that have no understanding. (Ps. 32) To depart from God is seed of a bitter crop. It was *mixed* motives which led Lot, and lead many now-a-days, into places of sorrow, and conflict, and chastening. It is the first step in any course which is the greatest mistake of all, and leads us on to all the rest. I doubt much whether we who are out *here* are living as dwellers in heaven, and in the vision of the gospel of the glory of Christ, as our common Lord desires us to be. The power of things material and present is what we have to contend with, and the battle of life is strong with many of us: but, if we abide in Christ, and walk in the Spirit, we shall find the power

of spiritual things and things to come stronger still, and able to buoy us up and enable us always and at all times to abide under the Banner of the Lord, where He is and where His own are hidden and sheltered. Lot moved at first under, and according to, Abram's measure of faith; and with him left the old country. Abram's faith became clearer and clearer, for his trust was in Jehovah, and if in mind and desire he had renounced everything to trust in Jehovah alone, his faith grew: he left himself and circumstances to the Lord. Lot trusted for himself to Jehovah, but thought too habitually of himself bettering his circumstances. God's thought was to better Lot's self, and He used Lot's circumstances to show him the folly of planning for himself in his circumstances — he lost all but his own soul, even confidence in God. Abraham gave up everything to trust in the Lord, and prospered: Lot sought his own and lost all. Poor Jacob was another instance; he, Jacob, planned how to *help God to make good* promises which He had given. What a scene that is at Jabbok! ere he lost the name of Jacob and became, as one praying, Israel. A prince with God and not a tripper up, or supplanter.

B. "I fear," (said one B. to me, V.). "you find us immigrants very self righteous."

V. "That did not strike me as the distinctive peculiarity. What has struck me with, surprise is — as a new comer among you, How little do these realize and present to my soul the spiritual perception and power of *the presence of God*. But I think I can account for it. If I had been wrecked coming out here, and but just escaped to shore, I suppose I should have felt and said: 'Thank God; if all else is lost, He is left to me (even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ).' But when it came to my having to face the difficulties of my new circumstances, the energy required might make me soon lost amid my material circumstances." Having food and raiment let us therewith be content.

If my energy is drawn from within myself, it will bring with it worldliness and selfishness, and leave the door ajar for Satan. Thus I (the creature) get a large place. If, on the other hand, I draw energy from inside of Christ crucified and risen (as had Paul to do, 2 Cor. 12: 8-10, and 1: 8-10), then heaven and Christ and a Father's love fill me; but I know how very little I myself am: and I mind heavenly things and care for them alone.

I should not say as you do, "self righteousness": but too large development of creature (or of the first Adam) character; at the expense of Christ's having us, through resurrection-life, an His witnesses in all self mistrust, gentleness, moderation, love, brotherly love and pity toward the world around us.

So far as to ourselves and difficulties from around arising in man's things; a word now as to difficulties as to worship.

The first distinguishing feature of the Church of God is her *oneness*.

As one wrote lately: When I was bowed down (with the subject of the many churches now on earth), and distracted in mind — truth (new to me, yet taught in Scripture) first burst in upon my mind, viz: that "the Church of God is one and but one, — in whatever place, at whatever time found, from Pentecost, when she was formed, till her removal from the earth (to make way for the root and offspring of David's kingdom) *the church is but one*. The truth seemed full of light and glory."

This is, I suppose, what is meant by the old term "Catholic [that is, universal] Church." Another truth followed thereupon — that God's Church is His *House*, (1 Tim. 3: 15; Heb, 3: 6; 1 Peter 4: 17); *His dwelling place*, (John 14: 17; Rom. 8: 11; 1 Cor. 3: 16; 2 Cor. 6: 16; Eph. 3: 17; 2 Tim. 1: 14); His *habitation* (Eph. 2: 22.) upon earth, from Pentecost, until she be removed by God to Heaven. God the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost to *abide* as the Paraclete (or Comforter) in the church (John 14: 16-18) and He remains on earth — as we see (Rev. 22: 17) When the Lord's voice says "I am the root and offspring of David, — the bright and morning star." *Then*, "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." This is

still future.

I am startled and often surprised to find how many there are who would admit and own that God, dwelling between the Cherubim, made the tabernacle in the wilderness-journey of Israel to be a very holy place and to be greatly honoured; and how God, dwelling afterwards in the temple, when Israel dwelt in the land, gave it, too, a peculiar sanctity — who yet think little of how God, *dwelling among His people in the church*, gives it a dignity, and should fill the soul with awe before Him when we are met in this His habitation. Alas! I must further add, how many of us are there of whom this is true, that we do recognise ourselves as His company, and therefore as those whose souls (if not our hearts) are living, through faith, in the Lord Jesus up there on the throne of the Majesty in the highest; and through faith in the Spirit sent down from the Lord on high to dwell among us, as those who are living with God and so to Jesus Christ? He is the living and true God, and we are in the light of His presence.

To return for a moment. I am not surprised at the delight produced in the soul of a believer by the first ray of light of the oneness of God's church, the fulness or complement of that body of which Christ is already the glorified head (Eph. 1: 23) in heaven. Spoken of and first predicted by Christ in Matt. 16: 18, and Matt. 18: 17-20, it was formed first of all, brought into being by the coming down from heaven, on the day of Pentecost, of God the Holy Spirit, to make the disciples whom Jesus loved, and who in love to Him waited for the promise of the Father, His abode. In various aspects is it looked at in Scripture as — 1. "*The habitation of God, through the Spirit.*" (Eph. 2: 22.) A holy temple in the Lord (v. 21). See also the same truth referred to in connection with His indwelling in apostles and saints: John 14: 17 — He dwelleth with you and shall be in you; and Rom. 8: 11 — His Spirit that dwells in you, and 9, 10, 14; and 1 Cor. 3: 16 — You are the temple of God, and the Spirit dwells in you; and 2 Tim. 1: 14 — Keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in you; 1 John 4: 12 — God dwells in us; and 16, and God in him; and 15, God dwelleth in him; Heb. 3: 6 — Whose house are we; so also John 14: 16 — Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; and 1 John 3: 24 — We know that he abides in us, etc., etc.

2. It is spoken of as the *body of Christ*, 1 Cor. 6: 18. Your body [i.e. of any believer as an individual] is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and 12: 12-27, as the [human] body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if the were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. See also Eph. 1: 23: the church, which is His body; and Eph. 4: 16: 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; and v. 23: For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body; and Col. 2: 19: And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

3. As the *family of the Father* — wherein the Son is first-born among many [adopted] children of His Father — Heb. 2: 10-14, the sanctifier and the sanctified are all [not one but] *of one* ['Spirit,' or perhaps 'set,' i.e. sons]; note that they are not any where said to be *children of the Lord Jesus*, but of His Father, and so, through grace, His brethren. The gospel of John and the epistle look at us in the light of children rather than as the church. See John 17 and the three unities referred to in v. 11, 21, 22.

4. The *espoused* (2 Cor. 11: 2) and the *Bride* (Rev. 22: 17) and the *Wife* (Rev. 19: 7) of the Lamb — until the Lord comes, and till all is finished and perfected in glory, *one* and only *one*.

Thus the Father and the Son and the Spirit each, severally, has a special connection with it. And how wondrously glorious that time to come when instead of the mystery of Babylon the great, the mother of Harlots, and city of iniquity down here filled by Satan for the world, with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, the mystery the church will be the Bride the Lamb's wife and dwelling place of God and of the Lamb in heaven. When Abba's house shall have become the home of Abba's children; no voice but that of the beloved Son regulating any thing; no Spirit but that of the Father and the Son pervading all. What unity in doctrine and in fellowship, in action and in praise! Wonderful and signal the exceeding riches of grace, and all these to the praise and the glory of it.

What a difference between all this and a modern "independent church!"

All this glory\* to come was part of the counsel and plan of the Father for the glory of the Son, who became a man and died on Calvary, that the throne of God might become the mercy-seat and Himself, alive on it, be the fountain of eternal life and blessing to us through the Spirit. God makes it good to His own people. The light of it shined down at Pentecost, and was entrusted dispensationally to man as true; that so, if man, believing, walked softly, and humbly laid hold of God's strength, there might be a feeble and imperfect, but not untrue, representation of it through faith and by the Spirit on earth before men down here. But man betrayed the trust, and failure set in.

\*Many have assumed that the church, first set up at Pentecost, is, nothing new, and merely means the saved, through grace, from Adam down to the coming glory. In this they hold what sets aside Paul's written testimony, as Eph. 1: 9. God has made known to us the mystery of His will . . . that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He would gather together in one all things in Christ, both in heaven and on earth. . . in Him; 2: 20, it is built upon the foundation of the [Now Testament] apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

Note: there were no apostles in the Old Testament, nor till Christ came. Jesus Christ had to come and die and rise again ere He could become the chief corner stone of that Church, of which He said (Matt. 16: 18) I will build it. The prophets of Old Testament times did not know the hidden secret things, (Deut. 29: 29): such as the "mystery": concerning Christ and the church — the church His body, one Spirit with Him, and to be presented by Him to Himself all glorious (Eph. 5: 22-33). They do write of days to come, in which Israel, the centre of blessing upon earth, will have gathered to it Gentiles; but they do *not* speak of Jew and Gentile being gathered, as in the church, by the Holy Spirit, to a heavenly Christ — both having equal access by one Spirit to the Father in heaven. But Paul writes: God made known to me the mystery . . . the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ (Eph. 3). [Observe

— We are co-heirs with *Christ*, the body is *of Christ*, the promises are *in Christ*. Compare Eph. 1: 3-6; 2 Cor. 1: 18-22.] The unsearchable riches of Christ! and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world [lit. from the ages, from eternity] has been bid 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, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3.)

Look through Scripture and you will find, 1st, that it has ever been so with men; 2ndly, that God has never once restored man to what he has failed in; 3rdly, He has been long-suffering and patient; but one failure, and that as to which man failed in, is forfeited.

Observe, too, that at Pentecost there was such a perfect unity that there was but one rule and doctrine, and fellowship and practice and character — for there was but one Spirit, and He wrought through His own chosen vessels. In Jerusalem, the 5000 men, besides women and young people, may have met in twenty places; so in Judea and Samaria, when the work spread thither; and so among the Gentiles when they were visited and blessed. But the Ruler was one Spirit everywhere, and the relationship of Father and Son the same to each part blessed.

If any one was not in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, he was not a saved man, and the saved were all therein. Young men, youths, fathers, might know various measures of the truth; but the Truth was one, and the Spirit one. It might vary in its mode of approach in grace to a Jew, or to a Samaritan, or to a Gentile; but it was one and the same truth, though God only knew its full measure, and yet the feeblest mind might get a ray of it suited to its own littleness. It might look upon obedient children and rebellious children variously, and act differently, because it was guided by the Father, according to the glory of the Son and the mind of the Spirit, as to these children. Known unity with the mind of God and of Christ, through the Spirit, came out in perfect purity in the New Scriptures.

At Corinth, when evil came in, there were four or five sects; but inside the one church; for there still was but one church, and one rule, and one body. Now, there are sects out of all number, each one thinking itself right and others wrong; but none of them (save Rome and the Irvingites) venturing to say "We are the Church of God, and the saved are all with us, and none any where else." This involves really the confession (by all save Rome and the Irvingites) of there being no one church displaying divine unity. How came this about?

Unity in principle and practice there was of a divine character at Pentecost. Unity in principle and practice there was to be of a Satanic worldly character — the Mystery Babylon, etc. At the Reformation, what was it which really took place? God, through grace and in His providence, gave back the Scriptures to men out of the bands of the priesthood, and gave, too, a certain action by His Spirit to some consciences. What was this book but the Record and Standard of revealed truth — God's own written Word. "It is written" is a simple text and powerful (see, for instance, Matt. 4: 7, 10) when rightly understood and rightly applied in spirit and purpose. Verse 6 shows that, if otherwise, it has no power, and can be used by Satan with a view to mislead. Man needs not the Bible only — that is, in itself, God's standard of truth (John 5: 47), but also to be taught of God, (John 6: 45,) that he may understand God's mind and thoughts and ways as presented in it, and, purged in himself by it through faith, may see its applications to what went before, or is around him, or is to come.

Man might say, in reading it, What a beautiful thing the Church was under Peter and Paul, and how was it the very contrast of that which we called the church down here on earth, in Rome and in Greece, and have sought to escape from. If any one who had got so far, sought further, he would have found that man was to blame for all the change, and that he had to eat of the fruit of man's doings, and

of God's judgments on the quenching of the Spirit and dishonour done to Christ therein. Each one might have said, how blind have we been and are we, and how incompetent we on whom the judgment has come, to make that which is crooked straight (Ecc. 1: 15), or to bring a clean thing out of an unclean. To own the failure and be ashamed of it, and of our connection with it, to admire what had been, was all right, and is all right now. But when the word is studied further, I find that the word of God has a word for me in these circumstances as to God. He will not restore man in ruin by human instrumentality to what divine power and goodness did set up; but He gives it all over to His Son, that He will bring those who, amid the failure, trust in God and obey His word addressed to them in these circumstances, into something far better, even the fulfilment of the antitype when the type has melted away. I do not, then, on the one hand despair as to God and His grace, because all has failed in myself and in man; nor do I go on in wickedness as though there were no hope.

If I was bankrupt in intelligence, affection, and purpose, as to God and His word; the mind, too, pre-occupied with human thoughts and desires as to what should be; I had been born and nurtured in the pit (Eph. 2: 1-3). But God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have known no ruin, no change in them. I had to venture all upon them and them alone.

Others might say, the church which was at Pentecost *we have set up again*. I could only say: "I trust I have a mark as one that sighs and that cries for all the abominations that are done in the Lord's name, and among those that profess to be His" (Ezek. 9: 4, read the chapter and the sixth of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel). But when I looked, I found the forms they had set up were without power. And they that had pretended to have authority and power had lifeless forms. They had taken it for granted that they were to do something, and were authorised and able to do it, and God would do the rest and restore what was life. But for this they can show no word. Nonconformity has piously multiplied forms of so-called churches out of all number. The sheep have been called to choose shepherds, and the uninstructed flocks to appoint elders to rule over them, and deacons to do other work. Who required this at their hands? Not God, whose word said He would *not* set up again what had fallen down since Pentecost, but pass it on to judgment, and yet care for His own whose faith and hope were in Himself. And not only said that of this fallen thing (see Rom. 11), but shown in His word that such has ever been His way, whose thoughts are not our thoughts, neither our ways His ways (Isa. 55: 8). Occupied with forms and practically acting as if they were possessed of power [a thing the imitation of which is sure to recoil with disgrace upon the imitator], the churches (so called) have let slip the truth of the one holy catholic church of Pentecost, and know not what they are about. That God may bless the preaching of the gospel, and build up souls into Christ by means of many so placed, is true; and I pray that it may be so. But as to communion of saints, may God graciously help them.

What, then, are we to do? The written word says: "Where two or three are gathered to together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18: 20.)

Again, "The Lord knoweth them that are His — [being His; their walk] and, Let every one that names the name of the Lord, depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2: 19).

Again, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (v. 22).

And again, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11: 26).

At Corinth, there were no pastors or elders, that is, when Paul wrote, only simple disciples.

And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will

come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14: 23, and 21 and 24).

So again as to holiness in doctrine, morality, and walk, etc. Give me intelligence, directions, authority, and power by, the Holy Ghost, and I can, through grace, obey the word either as to my own individual self, or as to saints round about me.

How ought you to judge and act (it may be asked) when a condition of things, plainly set forth in the word of God, no longer exists?

My answer is, Listen to Scripture and follow its instructions out, as they apply to such a state of declension and failure as you are in. If any child of Adam tried to create anew his primitive state of innocency, or (as Jew or Gentile), tried to be perfectly obedient to the law of Moses, neither of them would know how to meet God's mind. The both of them pretend to an intelligence and power which they possess not. Let them confess and be humbled before God for the state they are in, and trust and hope in God, and walk before Him in obedience. Just so as to the believer now, amid the failure round about us. Reader, if my address No. 1 ought to humble the soul of every believer, as an individual, ought not No. 2 and 3 to humble us as members of Christ's body and of His church, to wean us *from man* and strengthen us *in God*?

As to Gifts, we are built upon *the foundation* of New Testament apostles and prophets (Eph. 2: 20), Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. So that I have the full benefit (so far as today admits of it,) of the Scriptures of the New Testament prophets, and of the service, and conduct, and ensample of the apostles in planting and ruling. Besides these, evangelists, and pastors and teachers are spoken of (Eph. 4: 11,) as persons given to the church. That there may be such given now-a-days I have often prayed, and earnestly, of God. I am sure we much want the service of such. But I confess I am stumbled at the way many think of themselves, and speak of themselves, and of others, as being such gifts given. It would be more humble and lowly, methinks, for them to work more, and to put forward their thoughts about themselves less: and to let others find out that they are gifts given, if so they really are. Any child of God may care for his Father's children; and may, so far as he has learnt the truth, teach it; and persecution scattered abroad the first who went every where preaching the word (Acts 8: 1-4). Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. I do not deny that consciousness of power ought to lay the conscience under a sense of responsibility. But those who work most, and by whom God has wrought most these last forty years, are those who think and speak least of their being or having gifts.

I am sometimes astonished, too, I confess it, at the questions about what gift each one of us has — by those in whom I can see none. Many of them possessed, truly, of eternal life and the Holy Spirit, and a place in the body of Christ, and serving, too, through grace in faith and love and hope; yet thinking nothing of that or of the Spirit indwelling, or of their place in the body of Christ, in comparison of some gift or gifts they are anxious to discover in themselves. A few, too, have thoughts about offices and duties, (and would like to be recognised in them,) of which the New Testament says nothing.

In Paul's letter to the *Ephesians* - the church is presented as God's *Portion for Christ* — *in, of, and for Himself*. The GIFTS are of *persons*, (evangelists, pastors, teachers. c. 4: 11) and of *functionaries* in the *life* of the body (v. 16).

In the first to the *Corinthians*, the church is looked at as being God's *witness* for Himself *versus* false religions which were of Satan (1 Cor. 12 and 1 Cor. 14). And what sign gifts has the Witness, which has failed through unfaithfulness, retained for *herself now*?

Apostles and prophets (v. 11) — were the foundation (c. 2: 20).

I would close with suggesting to my brethren a few considerations.

In man's *world-church* all is ruled and regulated by man: and, not believing that the church is the place in which the Spirit abides and acts, man has had and has to arrange every thing. If the meetings for worship and for breaking of bread are consciously and conscientiously held under the eye and in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit being present, we may look for deep reverence and a certain spiritual awe being over the assembly — which will make us swifter to hear than to speak. A large measure of self-judgment, too, is supposed to be in us (1 Cor. 11: 27-34). As to pre-arrangement there can be none. Though, in honour, we may prefer others to ourselves. All I have asked, and I do ask it again, is that the manifested presence of the Father and the Son may be *brought* by each of us *to* the table (see John 14: 21, 23); and that the Spirit may make what is referred to. (1 Cor. 14: 24, 25) manifest — "he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart manifest; and so, falling down on his face he [that comes in] will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."

The Lord's Supper we observe as His bidden guests; and the company were wholly made up of those so completely of different parts of the earth as that *no two* of them understood the same language, it might happily be kept and the primary object of it be answered. Over and beyond that, whatever else takes place, is for the intelligent and intelligible edification of those that are guests. This necessarily calls the mind of each that may take a part *from* the liberty they assuredly have, and *from* the inclination they may feel — to speak — *to* the question of *building up those present*. We have power over ourselves (so Paul says); and "*Let all things be done unto edifying*" (1 Cor. 14: 26, and Eph. 4: 12, 15, 16). I know nothing happier than an evening spent in singing hymns, and prayers, and reading chapters. But that is hardly "*unto edifying*" at a worship meeting or at the table of the Lord, when *the assembly is met together*. Certain gravity and sobriety and collectedness of manner, and the more aged of the place and not the younger bearing any responsibility which may arise, would surely be worthy of God, as not the God of confusion, but of peace in all churches of the saints. But nature teaches these things (1 Cor. 11: 14), and I do not speak of them now. Reverence before God present in Spirit with us, and from the objects of faith and hope then before us, — past, present, and to come; self-girdedness in that presence of each one by himself, and the building up of the souls before the Lord in all that is done, are the three desires of my heart and my prayer for the saints.

G. V.W.

P.S. — For myself, seeing that the Church of God originally was the assembly, or company, of all the believers upon earth who were walking by the Spirit in the faith, I do not give the name to any company anywhere now that this has ceased to be the case. To use it is to pretend to be more than we are; and we have no warrant from the word to do so. "We are of the Church," if really acting upon what those principles were when the unity existed. This is as far as I can admit to be correct.

Christchurch, 26th May, 1874.