

One Body and One Spirit

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The will of God is that His church should be *one*, not in spirit merely, but also in an embodied form, so as to exhibit its unity in each place, and its unity throughout the world (John 11: 52; 17: 11, 21; Acts 2: 11; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 1; 10; 12; Eph. 2; 4; 1 Tim. 3: 15). This He will accomplish in perfection at the coming of Christ (John 17: 21, 23; Eph. 5: 27; Heb. 12: 23; Rev. 19: 7; 21: 9). Meantime it is incumbent on all believers to seek this holy and manifested union, and to put away everything that hinders it. We may be weak in meeting our corporate responsibility, as we are in answering our individual calling to holiness. Still in both respects, and in spite of all difficulties, our duty remains clear, paramount, and inevitable. But this is not by the mass of Christians maintained as a sacred, irreversible, point of doctrine and practice.

Popery owns it, but after a carnal manner.

All the Protestant national bodies have asserted, and acted on, the assumed title to accommodate their modes of government, rites, ceremonies, etc., according to the will of their rulers, whether they be within or without the so-called churches. These, consequently, vary in different ages and countries. The dissenting bodies, again, have been formed, generally speaking, either according to the self-devised plan of some individual mind, sometimes without even the idea of the church of God occurring to its founders; or according to partial views of scripture truth, which scatter the faithful instead of uniting them.

The chief error of nationalism, in this or in any other country, is the latitudinarian opening of the door to receive into the most solemn acts of worship and Christian fellowship the whole population, *i.e.*, in principle, irrespective of looking for the gift of the Spirit. That of dissent, on the contrary, is the sectarian closing of the door on real Christians who cannot utter the Shibboleth of the party; and thus many brethren are excluded. In a word the characteristic evil of the latter is, that they *do not* treat as Christians many who are known to be such; whereas the equally characteristic evil of the former is, that they *do* treat as Christians many who are known not to be such at all. The one system makes the limits broader, the other narrower than God's limits. In either way the proper scriptural idea of the church is practically destroyed: dissent virtually affirming that it is not one body, but many; while nationalism virtually denies that it is the body of Christ. God would have His children not to be separate, but to gather together to the name of Jesus. Now this is evidently set aside when you separate any who ought to be united, (*viz.*, all believed on proper grounds to be true Christians), or when you associate as brethren in Christ with any who ought to be separate (*viz.*, those who are plainly of this world,* or who, if they profess Christ, deny Him in evil doctrines or works).

* The Evangelical Alliance — which I believe to be a result, however imperfect, of the testimony at home and abroad to the present ruin of the church — is, in fact, an acknowledgment that there is no such union avowed and acted on in modern Christianity. It is really therefore, a confession on the part of its members that they feel dissatisfied with their respective systems: for obviously, if any one system among Protestants had been according to the mind of God, there would have been no need of the Evangelical Alliance. Now it is remarkable, and ought to be known more widely, that the most able and spiritual of its Continental advocates has publicly allowed, not only that he regrets the constitution of the Alliance, but that the above ground is a better one. Compare pp. 12 and 38 of the "Alliance Evangelique (Section de la Langue Francaise, Paris, 1847)." "Cela dit, si l'on nous demande: n'avez

vous pas des doutes sur la convenance d'une base dogmatique? ou tout au moins, ne regrettez vous pas que tel ou tel article ait trouvé entrée dans cette base? Nous répondons: oui, dans ces deux cas, et surtout dans le second. Nous avons lutté même pour notre part contre les articles en question. Mais la grande majorité de l'assemblée ayant été d'un avis contraires au nôtre, nous nous sommes rendus, soit parce que nous estimons possible que d'autres voient mieux que nous, soit aussi parce qu'à défaut de ce qui nous paraît le meilleur nous sommes d'avis de 'retenir ce qui est bon.'"

It may be replied perhaps, that though this was, beyond all legitimate question, the order of the Holy Spirit in the early days of the church, times and circumstances are altered now. Gifts of healing, working of miracles, diversities of tongues, no longer exist as they once did. All this is freely admitted. But we ask, Is there such a body as the church* any longer on the earth? If there be, the Spirit of God is Himself personally on earth as truly, though not so manifestly, as at the commencement; for He it is who is the formative agent and guide of the church. It was He that baptised Jews and Gentiles into one body. It was He that was to abide for ever. The church, properly so called, began then as an accomplished fact (see Acts 1: 5, and 1 Cor. 12: 13); for one speaks not of the hidden purpose of God. Pentecost first saw her dowered with the promise of the Father.

* When we speak of the *ruin* of the church, it is not meant that the church does not exist upon the earth. On the contrary, if it did not exist upon the earth, it could not be in any such condition. The phrase is similar to that which is applied to a man of broken fortune. Men say, "He is a ruined man." Of course it is understood that the man exists. So it is with the present state of the church. That state doubtless occasions difficulties; for many things are not as they ought to be, nor as they once were. But the word and Spirit of God are for eternal service, and suffice for every emergency. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light: but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The humble and obedient heart will never lack divine guidance.

Believers of course there had been before, as we know, from Abel downwards; but, though quickened of the Spirit, they were not baptised of Him, they had not Him dwelling in them, like the saints after Pentecost. This was the precious privilege, for which it was expedient that Christ should go away: "for if I go not away, the Comforter (or Advocate) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16: 7). It could not be till Jesus was glorified (John 7: 39). But when sent down from heaven, the Spirit of truth was to be *in* them, and to abide *with* them for ever. "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14: 16, 17).

It is the owning, then, of the Holy Ghost as Christ's vicar, as the really present, sole, and sufficient Paraclete or Advocate in the church during our Lord's absence, which is our special responsibility, and ought to be a leading feature in our testimony as Christians.

This cardinal truth of the presence of the Holy Spirit in and with the church has these two immensely important consequences: —

I. It is not by baptism, infant or adult ;* it is not by the adoption of this or that article or creed; it is "by one Spirit," the Holy Spirit of God, "we are all" (*i.e.*, all of us believers) "baptised into one body" (1 Cor. 12, 13). It is, if one may be allowed so to say reverently, the highest qualification which God can impart — the baptising by the Holy Spirit Himself of the blood-washed believer — which introduces into the one body, the body of Christ. But this is the privilege of all true Christians. Nothing therefore short of a platform such as in principle to admit *all* Christians, and Christians *only*, can satisfy faith, because nothing short of this satisfies the Spirit of God. When it is said, "Christians only," it is

meant, so far as man guided by the word and Spirit of God can discern. If they are hypocrites, they will be made manifest in His own good time.

* It is not denied that baptism was the outward sign or manifestation of a confessor of Christ. Only it is important to remember that a believer was not baptised as a member of any particular assembly. Recognised by baptism as a confessor of Christ, one naturally sought communion where one happened to be, if there was an assembly there; and the Lord's supper was the constantly-recurring outward pledge and symbol of union and communion. "For we, being many, are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread " (1 Cor. 10: 17). It may be added here, that those who preached in no way regarded baptism or the Lord's supper as rites to be administered necessarily by them. Thus Peter commanded Cornelius and his friends to be baptised in the name of the Lord (Acts 10: 48); and Paul writes, "Christ sent me, not to baptise, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1: 17). He says this markedly as to the Corinthians, and many of them, we know, believed and were baptised (Acts 18: 8); so that other brethren must have acted in this service. As to the Lord's supper, the same thing is as plain, if not more so. In fact the idea of an authorised person to break the bread does not occur, nor anything that I know which gives a colour to it, in the New Testament. See Acts 20: 7, also 1 Cor. 11, where if under any circumstances, there might have seemed the need of some restraint; for the Corinthians had turned the table to fleshly licence. But while the Spirit reproves the evil, and presses the holy and solemn character of the feast, He leaves the manner of its celebration as unrestricted as ever. It is the saints as a body who are in His view, and not a privileged class who claim the administration as their right. Circumstances apart, as for the example in the case of a novice, any brother was competent to baptise or to break the bread.

2. After the apostle has discussed the confession of the Lordship of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 3), which is the foundation of everything here, he shows that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; diversities of services, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, but the same God working all in all. Then in 7-11 he enters into the detail of these manifestations of the Spirit. It is given to each for common profit; whether the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, etc.: different manifestations, "but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Now, while it is confessed that some or many of the exterior gifts are no more found, it must be here affirmed that this does not in the smallest degree negative the truth that the Spirit Himself does abide. But if He abides, has He resigned His functions? If even in these days, when pride cannot cloak the spiritual declension it so vainly strives to deny, if still one Christian has "the word of wisdom," and another has "the word of knowledge," is it from the Spirit of God, or from some other spirit? "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2: 11). Can it be mere man's wisdom now? or is there such a thing as the teaching of the Holy Spirit?

It may be assumed, I trust, that the Christians who read this paper believe that there is still real power to evangelise the world and to edify the church. If so, whence comes it? The natural man knows nothing but natural things, and can neither receive nor communicate the things of the Spirit of God. Real, spiritual power is of Him. Who of us believers is not a witness that this power still continues? Weakened and blunted, alas! it is; for He who works is grieved with all the sin, and confusion, and desolation around Him. But He does abide, and His power abides, and the way in which He acts, according to the scripture cited, is "dividing to every man severally as he will." Clearly then He uses whom He pleases. It is no humanly divided caste that He employs to be the narrow and exclusive channel of His blessing. No: He does not vacate His sovereignty. It is not the pleasure, therefore, of a preacher, nor of a synod of preachers, nor of a congregation, nor of a sect, nay, nor of the true church,

much less of a worldly power. It is the Spirit of God. And He divides as He will. Again He divides to each, or *every man* (i.e., inside the church), not this or that particular gift; but He does divide something for the common good — "to every man severally as he will."

Hence the order and action of the church, as described in scripture, depend upon the presence and the operations of the Holy Ghost. And if He be allowed free scope to work, it is, if we are in truth to follow God's word, according to the pattern of "many members, yet but one body." He acts in the unity of the whole body. After this manner we shall find His testimony regulated, as is plain from the Acts and Epistles: and this, whether inside or outside the church.

As for the testimony to those without, compare Acts 8: 1, 4; Acts 11: 20; Acts 18: 24-28; and Phil. 1: 14. The mass or main part of the church, scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, went everywhere preaching the gospel. Among them Philip was conspicuous in Samaria and elsewhere. If it be said that *he* was officially set apart, the answer is, It was to serve tables, not to preach the word of God. The office was instituted that the twelve, relieved from care touching this business, might give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. If Philip preached with power, if Stephen disputed with irresistible wisdom, and if both wrought miracles, none of these things was in virtue of an appointment which related simply and specifically to the daily ministrations. Compare Acts 6: 6 with Acts 4: 35. Further, others of those dispersed "travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians (or rather Greeks), preaching the Lord Jesus." Did these brethren assume what was unjustifiable? Were they reprov'd even by the church at Jerusalem, ready as many there always were to censure what seemed irregular? "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord" (Acts 11: 22-24).

At a later period "Apollos spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord:" and this, when he knew only the baptism of John. Instructed more perfectly, through the instrumentality of a believer and his wife, who were as unauthorised as himself, he is soon found more active and honoured than ever: "he helped them much which had believed through grace; for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18). At Rome, the most in the Lord, waxing confident by the bonds of Paul, were much more bold to speak the word without fear. It is true the motives of all were not good; but this is a danger which no human restriction could ward off. Alas! motives baser even than these were necessarily introduced, when the so-called ministry of Christ became synonymous with a regular, respectable, and in some cases lucrative profession. It was not so in apostolic days; yet even then, there were those who preached Christ of envy and strife, as well as others who preached of good will. What then, says the large-hearted apostle? Does he propose to fetter that blessed liberty, because it was now abused by these unholy feelings? Nothing of the sort. "Notwithstanding every way," says he, "whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice." (Phil. 1: 18)

I need not quote other scriptures less direct, but equally showing that doctrine, not ordination, is the divine test for rejecting or receiving those who profess to be ministers of Christ. It is clear that several passages have been adduced which prove that such Christians as can be at liberty, not to say are bound, to preach the gospel. Not one text can be brought forward which contradicts, limits, or qualifies the principle. Scripture *never* prescribes a human commission as a necessary preliminary to

that work. On the contrary, the parable of the talents in Matt. 25 teaches, by its solemn judgment, the danger of waiting for other warrant than the fact that the Lord delivers to the servants His goods, wherewith they are responsible to trade. To doubt the grace of the Master, to fear because one has not the authentication of those who presumptuously claim and trifle with His right, to bury the talent in the earth, is to act the part of the wicked and slothful servant. For the Lord of the harvest, to use another parable, has alone the title to send forth labourers (compare Matt. 10 and Rom. 10). In a word, the question is not whether all Christians are qualified of God to preach the gospel, but whether those who are so qualified may not preach without waiting for any human authoritative call. Scripture, we have seen, decides that they may.

As for the testimony to those within, 1 Cor. 14 shows plainly, that the only restriction upon the exercise of gifts by brethren was this: "Let all things be done unto edifying." Women were positively forbidden to speak in the churches. Elsewhere they were responsible to use whatever gift the Lord imparted to them, subject to His word. Thus Priscilla, no less than Aquila, takes Apollos and expounds to him the word of God more perfectly (Acts 18: 26). And the four daughters of Philip did prophesy (Acts 21: 9), but not in the assemblies: the Spirit forbade that (1 Cor. 14: 34, 35). A woman was not suffered to teach nor to exercise authority over the man (1 Tim; 2: 12). But all the brethren, as a whole, were exhorted thus — "follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." And of course they were to exercise their gifts as God empowered them, so that all things were done decently and in order.

Hence it is that James says (James 3: 1), "My brethren be not many masters" (*i.e.*, "teachers"), an exhortation as entirely out of place in modern arrangements, as it was suitable, wholesome, and needed in their case whom he addressed: an exhortation which manifestly implied that there was an open ministry, which might very possibly be abused by the flesh, but which the Spirit, instead of closing or restricting, turned to the good of their souls by pressing upon them their direct responsibility to God. On the other hand, the entire family of God are exhorted not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets were gone out into the world (1 John 4: 1). Even the elect lady (2 John 10) is told that if any come and bring not the doctrine of Christ, he is not to be received. Those who hear, as well as those who teach, have need to take heed. Responsibility is maintained on all sides: from this none can escape.

In Rom. 12 we have the same thing, though from another point of view. "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every one that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each one a measure of faith. 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. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, [let us prophesy] according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, [let us wait] on our ministry; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, [let him do it] with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." God's dealing to each was looked to, and not a mere human commission to one, or to a few. Hence faith came in, and each is exhorted to think soberly of himself, and to use what God has given him instead of pretending to more. We see not one member absorbing all the gifts, or hindering others, but many members, and yet but one body, having gifts differing, and exhorted to employ them, not merely through love, because we are every one members one of another, but because of the grace given on God's part.

So in Eph. 4: 4-16: "[There is] one body and one Spirit. . . . But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of 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." Col. 2: 19 is to the same effect: . . . "the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

Again, 1 Peter 4: 9, 10 makes it a matter of positive obligation that "as each one hath received the gift," even so they should minister the same one to another. Thus, and thus only, should they be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." "If any one speak, let him speak as oracles of God: if any one minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Can anything more clearly show that mere human acquirement is of no value, while the idea of human restriction is perfectly shut out? Whatever came from God and nothing else, was to be used and received without further sanction, that God might be glorified *in all things* through Jesus Christ.

From these scriptures we learn also that the gifts from above were for the blessing of the whole body of Christ: not one for one particular section of the church, and another for another; but all open to the whole church, and the whole church open to all.

Thus, according to the divine plan, if I am a member of the church at all, I am a member of the church everywhere. If I go to any quarter of the world where saints call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, I am a member, not by permission nor by courtesy, but by the universal recognition, on the part of believers, of the title which grace has given me. Baptised by the Spirit, I am a member of Christ's body, wheresoever I may be. In apostolic days that membership, and none other, was known throughout. There might be differences of view. There might be need of the word, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Some might eat herbs, and some might eat meat; but the Spirit said, and says, "Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Now the glory of God is identified, not with some, but with all the members of the body of Christ. If the weakest member therefore were excluded, save in case of necessary scriptural discipline, so far would that glory be forgotten or despised; and those guilty of such exclusion ought to be avoided, as causers of divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we learned.

As is the ground of membership, so it is of ministry. It is of God's Spirit. If not, it is nothing or worse, and ought to be so treated by all those who honour God rather than man. If a Christian be an evangelist, he is so everywhere, and not restricted to this or that district, congregation, or chapel. If he be a teacher or a pastor, or both, he of course exercises his gift where he usually resides. But then he is not *the* teacher, but *a* teacher:* and he is a teacher in *the* church, and not in *a* church. "We," says the apostle, writing to far distant saints whom as yet he had not seen — we, "being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." He is not speaking of what was to be in heaven, but of what actually was on earth, the unity of Christ's body here below. "Having then gifts differing," etc.

* In the church at Antioch there were at least five prophets and teachers (Acts 13: 1).

So (1 Cor. 3). in meeting the carnal, because exclusive, preference of one servant of Christ above another, the apostle presses the broad and blessed truth, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," etc. It was a sectarian spirit in respect of those who ministered that Paul rebuked.

It is the same principle in 1 Cor. 12: 18-28: "But now God set the members each one of them in the body, as it pleased [him]. And if they 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 you. 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; but 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. And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." "God set some in the church," not in *a* church. Viewed as churches, apostles could be in but few. There were none in the church at Corinth when Paul wrote. Teachers stand clearly on the same base: apostles in *the* church, teachers in *the* church.

Again, in Eph. 4: 11-16, whether apostles, or prophets, whether evangelists, or pastors and teachers, they are given of Christ, not to be the solitary officials of a denomination, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come," etc. Verse 16 tells us that it is "the whole body fitly joined together," not broken into sects; the whole body "compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part": a practical thing, and not a mere theory, a thing meant to be in the church while on earth, and not at all referring to heaven. We shall not need such ministration there. In this passage there is also, I would notice, a warrant to faith for expecting the continuance of the gifts of Christ till His body be completed. And of a truth *He* has never failed during all the long years of ruin in which His gifts were well-nigh smothered, as they were too really and painfully misused.

For I fully recognise that there have been even in popery, in her clergy and laity, those who had gifts of God's grace to build up His own people, and to spread Christ's name among sinners. But, at the same time, I as utterly deny that they were Christ's gifts in virtue of the commission which popery conferred, any more than that others were not His gifts for the want of such a commission. The same remark, I need hardly add, extends still more widely to modern Protestantism. Would to God that the tender love of Christ, in thus cherishing the church as His own flesh, might touch a chord in all His members, that together we might weep over our common sin, and that together we might rejoice, extolling the grace that has abounded but the more!

There is, however, a distinction to be observed, which cannot be forgotten without injury. When the body came together *as such*, the assembly was under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. It would have trenched upon the right of Christ for any individual, however gifted he might be, to absorb the regulation of it into his own hands. The Giver is there, and He is looked to, not the gifts merely. The order of such an assembly is definitely laid down in scripture (1 Cor. 14). "Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.

It is quite a different principle which governs a servant of the Lord in the exercise of whatever talent has been entrusted to him. He owes an immediate and individual responsibility to Christ to trade with it. He may preach to the unconverted, or he may instruct more perfectly the children of God, or both, if he possess both gifts. He owes it to his Master to exercise all he has received for the good of souls, hindering and hindered by no one else. Every servant, be his gift great or small, has the same liberty and the same responsibility. Two or more may see it good to associate in the ministry; but let us remember that if Paul chose Silas, recommended to the grace of God, Barnabas took Mark; and we do not read that he was thus honoured of God in confirming the churches (Acts 15: 36-41). Liberty is not

licence. The servant is free of man, but bound to obey the Lord; and his brethren are no less bound to judge his disobedience.

These gifts, let it be borne in mind, must be kept distinct from local charges, such as the elders* or presbyters of scripture, which are ever regarded there as the same with the bishops, or overseers, as indeed Cranmer and others allow, whose practice was totally different. The charges had to do with some one church, and were appointed by an apostle, or by a delegate possessed of a direct and special commission from an apostle to that end. Such a delegate was Titus. But scripture nowhere intimates that authority for appointing elders was meant to continue. We have seen that the gifts of Christ were to be "till we all come," etc. But scripture never confounds them with local charges, although both clearly might co-exist in the same individual. We know this to have been Philip's case, who was one of "the seven," and an evangelist besides.

* In Acts 11: 30 they are mentioned for the first time in connection with the church at Jerusalem. They are prominent at the council in Acts 15; but not a hint is dropped in the Acts touching their appointment, if they really had any outward authorisation. James 5: 14 mentions the elders; and Peter (1 Peter 5: 1) and John (2nd and 3rd Epistles) call themselves elders, but do not speak of official establishment. This appears to be confirmed by the way in which the elders are in one place contrasted with the "younger" (1 Peter 5: 1, 5). Experience is in question, and moral weight to guide.

Pastorship, to come still closer, is a gift (Eph. 4: 11), eldership is a charge; but the gift of feeding the flock of God, so far from being incompatible with the office of an elder or bishop, was evidently one of the most important qualifications sought in those who desired that good work. Thus Paul (Acts 20: 28) exhorts the Ephesian elders to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers (bishops, ἐπισκόπους), to feed the church of God which He had purchased with His own blood. "Feed the flock of God," said another apostle, "which is among you, taking the oversight thereof (ἐπισκοποῦντες) not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over their allotments,* but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5: 2, 3).

* Into this wrong Christendom has long grievously fallen, nationalists or dissenters, and in so-called Catholic times. Their ministers and pastors do regard the parish its congregation, etc., as their allotments. "Do you belong to the Rev. So-and-So's church? I am of such another's." Thus is "the flock of God" overlooked and nullified.

In the First Epistle to Timothy (3) we find aptness to teach and ability to take care of the church of God among other requisites. Titus too (1: 5-9) was told to ordain such as held fast the faithful word, as he had been taught, that he might be able by sound doctrine to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. But it would be too much to draw thence that all the elders necessarily laboured in the public ministration of the word. They were appointed to exercise a godly fatherly care over the church; but labouring in the word and doctrine was not an indispensable adjunct. Hence the apostle says, in 1 Tim. 5: 17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." In one way or another, all elders were assumed to feed the flock; but there might be elders who did not serve, at least publicly, in the word: a principle recognised in the Presbyterian system.

Another remark is to be made on the question of rulers. Paul, in writing to the saints at Rome, exhorts "him that ruleth" to do it with simplicity. Now all the evidence we have goes to show that there was no official nomination as yet, if ever at Rome. Peter's primacy there is a dream, scripture affirming in a positive way that *he* was distinctively the apostle of the circumcision, as Paul was of the

uncircumcision. Now the latter had not yet visited the faithful in the Gentile metropolis. Accordingly there is not a word which supposes elders to have been appointed there. Nevertheless it is evident that those at Rome, like the rest of the church, had gifts of grace in their midst — prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, ruling, etc. These they might possess, and they are exhorted to use diligently; but not a word is said about elders. It has already been observed that at Corinth no elders are even implied, and yet the brethren were besought to submit themselves to such as addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, and to every one co-working and labouring.

Again, in 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Do not the exhortations "to know" them which labour and rule and preside (the same word as in Rom. 12: 8), suggest the thought that it was not a class officially appointed? Office must have been self-evident, and therefore would render needless an exhortation to recognise such labourers. The esteem and love was for their work's sake. An official place was not alluded to. In Hebrews 13: 7, 17, 24, certain chief men are named (οἱ ἡγούμενοι, leaders or guides); but there is nothing indicative of exterior appointment. It is probable that they were persons whose age, character, and gifts, gave them a certain place. See Acts 15: 22.

Now if any one in our day could give satisfactory (*i.e.* scriptural) proof that he was an apostolic delegate, his appointment of elders ought to be respected; and respected I have no doubt it would be by all (at any rate) whose eye was single to the Lord in the matter. If such proof be wanting, they ought to be as decidedly disowned. If then in scripture we see not elders appointed by any save apostles or their delegates, can nationalism or dissent justify their respective appointments by the word of God? Apostolic succession seems to be the only consistent plea in its pretensions as to this: in its pretensions, I say, for reality it has none — it is Christianity Judaised, or rather it is Judaism Christianised (see Bingham's Eccles. Antiq. b. i. ch. v.).

The case of Paul in Acts 13, which is sometimes referred to in proof of the necessity of a human commission, proves in fact the contrary. It would be strange indeed if it did, seeing that in Gal. 1: 1 he takes such pains to insist that he was an apostle, "not of men (*i.e.*, as the source), "nor by man" (as the channel). He had been preaching for years, before this separation by the Spirit to the special work recorded in Acts 13, 14. Further, those who fasted and prayed and laid their hands on him and Barnabas had been cherished and taught by them, as by those who were over them in the Lord. To such an imposition of hands I know of no objection. It pretends to confer neither gift nor authority, but is a simple commendation to the grace of God, which it would seem might be repeated (Acts 15: 40). Is there one feature in common with the ordination of our day and for ages? Is it possible that Christians, in order more thoroughly to justify a modern ordination by Acts 13, have pretended that Paul was only an inferior apostle, a messenger of the church — like Epaphroditus (Phil. 2: 25)? But see Acts 14: 4; Rom. 1: 1; 1 Cor. 1: 1; 1 Cor. 9: 1-6; Eph. 1: 1; Col. 1: 1; Gal. 1: 2; 1 and 2 Tim. 1: 1; Titus 1: 1; where, if we may so say, the highest form of the apostolate is claimed, and its entire independence of man.

It is too often forgotten that Matthias was chosen Jewishly, by lot, before the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to baptise the believers. The church, properly speaking, was not yet manifested. His election therefore can furnish no precedent for a state of things which was changed and governed by the presence of the Spirit. Nor do we read of the use of lots ever afterwards. The Moravian system, with its usual and blind servility, has tried to copy this and other forms which were peculiar to Jerusalem.

In the instance of Timothy, there were prophecies going before (1 Tim. 1: 18), and an actual gift imparted *by* prophecy, *with* the imposition of the hands of the presbyters (1 Tim. 4: 14), and *by* the imposition of Paul's hands (2 Tim. 1: 6): a case which it is not only impracticable to imitate without an apostle and duly chosen presbytery, not to speak of prophecy, but which is a mischievous pretension, unless there is the power to bestow the gift which was bestowed then. May God deliver His people from saying, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!"

Lastly, in 2 Tim. 2: 2 it is evident that the question is one, not of authority to appoint successors, but of communicating the things which Timothy had heard of the apostle by many witnesses. It was not to consecrate a clergy, but to commit sound doctrine to faithful men who should be able to teach others also.

On the other hand the dissenting principle of electing a pastor is purely human, derived not even from Judaism, much less from Christianity. Hear the testimony of one who was himself thus chosen, the author of "Spiritual Despotism" (p. 153). "It is not without some amazement that we find a congregational church, on the modern scheme, proceeding in the momentous act of creating or electing to itself a pastor and teacher, without being able to allege from the New Testament any law or licence to that effect, or any one example, satisfactory or unsatisfactory On secular principles nothing can be more simple or reasonable than that those who pay should command; and in the present temper of mankind, especially in certain circles, it may be nearly impracticable to secure submission to any other law. Nevertheless this serious question returns upon us, Is this the law or this the principle recognised as the basis of church policy in the New Testament? We are compelled to answer, It is not."

Yet some have professed to see it in Acts 14: 23; "When they had ordained (or *chosen*, as seems better) them elders in every church." But this proves not that the church, but that *they* (*i.e.*, Paul and Barnabas) chose the elders. Some argue from the etymology; but usage, not etymology, is the only safe guide. The word ($\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\tau\omicron\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$) meant originally to stretch out the hand. Hence, it was applied to voting in this manner, and by an easy transition to choosing without reference to the manner. Thus in Acts 10: 41 the same word, compounded with a preposition, is applied to God's choice, where the notion of the church's voting is of course excluded. When it was a question of a gracious and prudent use of tables, or the like, as in Acts 6 and 2 Cor. 8: 19, the assembly, or assemblies, did choose; though even in Acts, if the multitude of the disciples looked out seven faithful men, it was the apostles who appointed them over their business. In short, when God imparts a gift, *He* chooses; when the church gives what she can, *she* may employ what instrument seems to her fitting. As she cannot bestow a ministerial gift, neither ought she to choose, but to receive all those whom God has given for her good.

As to elders, then, an apostle chooses (Acts 14: 23) or leaves a delegate for a season during his own life to appoint them (Titus 1: 5-9), or describes to another the requisite qualities (1 Tim. 3: 2-7). In no case is the church invited to select them. The saints had no such authority, even in their brightest days. No epistle addressed to a church touches the question, and fitly so. It was not their mission. Titus was left in Crete expressly to set in order what the apostle had left undone, and to appoint elders in every city, as the apostle had appointed him and none else.

Afterwards he was to come to the apostle in Nicopolis (Titus 3: 12). You cannot have the one without the other. This is the sum of what scripture states, unless we add the "angels" of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. But "angel" is neither a gift nor a charge, but a moral representative of each church, and only introduced for special purpose in this great prophecy. Hence all systems with almost equal unreality try to fit in the "angel" to suit their aim. It applies in fact to no such thing, but to the introduction of a judicial book. The apostle looked, and taught the church to look, for

the coming of the Lord as their immediate hope. This of course stimulated and in no way hindered present care for the sheep; but it was inconsistent with perpetuating official organs for ages to come. Accordingly we find no such arrangements in the Epistles.

But as for gifts they rest on quite another ground; not upon apostles who might be removed, but upon Christ, who never ceases to be the head and source of nourishment, and cannot but love and cherish His body the church. These gifts never needed man's sanction, even when apostles lived. Christ dealt them without the intervention of any; so that what Paul said of his own apostolate might be said in principle of them all, "Not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." I speak of course of the manner and source of the gifts, not of their measure.

As regards discipline, it is of the utmost importance to bear in mind that it does not depend on gifts, offices, or any other thing than the blessed fact that the body, the church, is Christ's body, is gathered in His name, and has the Holy Ghost present to guide and energise its movements. He is, we may say, the soul of this holy and heavenly body. Hence the fullest directions respecting discipline, either in putting away or in restoring, were given to the Corinthian church, where it would seem there were at the time no elders. That there might be and were churches without elders is manifest from Acts 14: 23 and Titus 1: 5. The churches existed before any such charges were appointed. Elders were desirable no doubt for the administration of a church, but by no means indispensable to its being. Certain it is that at Corinth elders are not alluded to, and the disorders which broke out there are pressed home on the entire body. Nor does the Spirit, in correcting the abuses, suspend their functions as a church until elders were duly appointed. On the contrary, whether it be the extreme and solemn act of excision, or the worthy celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is the body which is addressed, rebuked, and charged with ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, in all these grave particulars. And this is the more striking, as it is clear that there were among them those who came behind in no gift (1 Cor. 1: 7); that, at any rate, the household of Stephanas addicted* themselves to the ministry of the saints, and that the believers in general are besought to submit themselves to such. It is not the labourers, I repeat, but the body which is appealed to in matters which the common consent of a fallen church has made the peculiar and distinguishing province of the clerical or ministerial order.

* The word is ἑτάξαν, and means that they set, appointed, or devoted themselves to the ministry. It is one of the words sometimes translated "ordained." Let those who have not scrupled to ridicule "self-appointment" weigh this passage, and remember that what they despise, as some carnal Corinthians may have done, the Holy Ghost by the apostle distinctly and unqualifiedly commends. If they will obey God, let them be subject to such.

Doubtless where overseers were, as at Philippi or Ephesus, they in their exercise of a godly care would naturally and justly have a large share of the practical details; and the more so as an appeal to the church is the last and most painful resort (Matt. 18: 15-17), the urgent object being to restore the soul, if so it may be in the Lord. But the known sin of a Christian affects the conscience of the body, for it is one body; and if not judged, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. If the offender mourn and depart from the evil after a godly sort, he is restored, and all rejoice; if he continue in that which dishonours Christ, the body must be cleared at all cost. "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, . . . For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away from among yourselves the wicked person."

Further, scripture even more sternly deals with false doctrine; because it is subtle, more poisonous in its effects, and touches the Lord Himself more directly than a bad walk. It is ever a work of the flesh, and may be emphatically of Satan far more than a mere carnal spirit of action. (See Gal. 5: 9-21; Rom, 16: 17, 18; 1 Tim. 1: 18-20; 1 Tim. 6: 3-5; 2 Tim. 2: 23-26; 2 Tim. 3: 6; 2 Tim. 4: 3, 4; Titus 3: 9-11; 1 John 4: 1-6; 2 John 10, 11; Rev. 2: 14, 15, 23, 24).

As it is the body which puts away, so it is equally for the body, under His direction Who dwells therein, to restore. God may use the instruments He sees fit to rouse the body to a remembrance of Christ's holiness in excluding a wicked person (1 Cor. 5), and of Christ's grace in forgiving and restoring a repentant brother (2 Cor. 2). In either case it is the conscientious action of the body which the Lord expects. If everything fail to awaken — if, in spite of patient testimony, the assembly persist in doing or cloaking evil, and so in tarnishing the Lord's name, the claim to be His body becomes null and void. It is an entirely corrupt lump, from which the Spirit, who loves Christ, would have us to separate, instead of wasting our energies in the effort to amend that which is irremediable, and only waiting for the judgment of the Lord.

There remains but one more difficulty for us to state and seek to remove. It has been supposed that the assertion of the failure of the church forces us to say that we in these last days cannot have recourse to the Epistles to the Corinthians, etc.; and so to fall back upon the promise — "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." The present pamphlet of itself is a sufficient answer to as hardy a charge as could well be made. It has been proved that nationalism and dissent cannot defend the principles of their membership or of their ministry by such scriptures as 1 Cor. 1, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16; Eph. 4, etc. The great truth of the church as being God's habitation through the Spirit, Who is the sole energy and distributor of the gifts of Christ in the unity of the whole body, is recognised by neither; it could not be practically owned for one moment without condemning both in all their varieties. Are all our brethren responsible to own this truth whatever may be the results of their confession? If they are not, let it be openly said.

But if the church once lived, rejoiced, suffered, in realising the blessedness of such a place, where and what are we? Are we not to feel, are we not to confess, are we not to have done with, all the evil known to us, which has overspread the professing body and made it a witness against Christ, not for Him? If I find myself honouring as the church of God a society or system whose laws are inconsistent with the leading scriptural principles of that church, am I not to confess my sin, and come out from the unclean thing? or am I to abide and sin on, that grace may abound? This is the true question.

It is now admitted by almost every Christian of moderate spirituality and intelligence, that the existing ecclesiastical condition, national or dissenting, is not to be defended, if we compare it with the word of God. Not merely in the detail is it wrong, but in its fundamental principles. Hence it is that some eminent names in the religious world boldly avow that the word of God, though perfect as regards individual justification, leaves men to their own discretion in the formation and government of churches: virtually they say we ought not to have recourse to such Epistles as 1 Cor. etc. for the present direction. One party is satisfied with things as they are; another yearns for a church of the future, wherein man may have things on a grander scale.

But if the saint of God shrinks from so fearful a principle as casting away the word of God which displays and demonstrates the infidelity of the church to its calling, what is he to do? Can a Christian hesitate? Is he not at once to cease from the evil he feels, and to humble himself before God for the failure of himself and the church? And if he knows two or three disciples meeting in Christ's name and opening the door wide that the Holy Ghost may act holily and fully, according to the blessed word He

has written and by whom He will, will he not gladly find himself there? Instead of using Matt. 18: 20 as a licence to do what is right in their own eyes, will they not thus gathered, learn to their joy that Jesus is ever faithful? Will they not bless God for the authority and sufficiency of His blessed word? and, if there be any difference, for the proved comfort and living applicability of the very scriptures, which their adversaries say they cannot have recourse to? Will they not afresh thank Him for the Holy Ghost, Who loves to act in the body as well as in the members, to the glory of the Lord Jesus?

It is God we need, it is the living God we have to do with, and not principles merely. His presence only can give power and blessing, even when the principles are right in themselves. This is what we seek, knowing that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

W. K.