

## The Body, the Church

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Jesus had shed His blood, was risen, and by the right hand of God exalted. If God had been glorified in Him, He also glorified Him in Himself, and this straightway. The Son of Man ascended up where He was before. He was glorified with the Father's own self, with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

Nor was His glorification without result to others. If on earth the Son of David could not disown the higher glories of His person, but rather led on the faith of a poor woman of Canaan to that infinite source of grace beyond, which, while it brought down to a real sense of the depth of degradation and woe, abounded but the more in streams of healing mercy; if on earth, "He could not be hid," what was the suited blessing that flowed down from the God-exalted Man, crowned with glory and honour in heaven? Were those He loved to taste no savour of His joy above? Was there to be no peculiar, no present, power of fellowship with Him, and worthy of Him Who was set at God's right hand "in the heavenly places far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come?"

On the contrary, it is precisely in this interval between His session on His Father's throne, and His coming to take His seat on His own throne, that the great mystery of Christ and of the church finds its place, development, and revelation. God, whose earthly purposes had been seemingly frustrated but really secured, though for a time in abeyance, uses the cross meanwhile as the basis of other and higher counsels (settled in His mind before the world was, but until now hidden in Himself), and thereupon exalts the crucified Lord of glory, and sends down the Holy Ghost, not only as the one and divine witness of what and where Christ was, but as the gatherer, by His own presence here below, of an assembly from among Jews and Gentiles, brought into the participation of the heavenly glory of Christ — in a word, as the formative agent of the church, which is Christ's body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Beyond just question, it is in reference to this new and heavenly assembly that scripture speaks of the closest identification with Christ, of oneness with Him as His body. By such a oneness, it is not merely meant that persons here and there, few or many, had been and are objects of love and quickening power of the Son of God. Life is not, nor does it produce, this oneness; abstractedly, it finds and leaves the recipients of it individuals still. Life did not set aside for this world, for those who possessed it, the remarkable characteristic and divinely sanctioned separation of Jews from Gentiles; much less did it sever externally believing Jews from their unbelieving kinsmen according to the flesh, whatever the mutual sympathies, hopes, and conferences one with another, of them that feared Jehovah. If there were devout Gentiles, (and there is little reason to doubt that God in His mercy raised up such, witness Cornelius, before the gospel of His grace could righteously be preached), they served Him and worshipped Him, but as Gentiles nevertheless. There was no fusion of these with the godly Jews. The faith of one might be admirable in the eyes of the Lord Himself—"so great faith He had not found, no, not in Israel:" still it did not hinder his remaining a Gentile.

Faith therefore in itself did not, and could not, alter that, as regards this life. It was reserved not for the gift but for the Giver of faith to work a wondrous, unlooked-for, and total reversal of the ancient order. So as to the Jews, though they had the gifts and calling of God, if any believed, the faith of individuals wrought without a doubt a moral separation, and sufferings were the consequence; and the new life has affections as proper to it as are depraved lusts to the old life; yet were not the faithful Jews

formed into a manifested holy company here below: they lived as Jews, they died as Jews. It would have been sin in them to have relinquished their prerogative and standing as Jews. Even in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, was not abolished. It existed still — nay, had His sanction, when He forbade those commissioned in the days of His flesh to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into a city of the Samaritans.

Now the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 2, 3) is that, consequent upon the cross, an entirely novel and different work of God commenced: a work which, belonging to and awaiting its perfect display in the heavenly places, has an actual existence on earth, and most momentous effects in this present time. The point is not Christ dying for the Jewish nation, nor God thereby reconciling all things to Himself. It is not Christ's death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, nor for the blessing of any Gentiles who may be saved during His future reign; none of which things perhaps would be questioned by a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. But the doctrine there enforced is that God founded upon the cross, and accomplished by the Holy Ghost thereon given, a platform and structure wholly without parallel in the millennial age, when the old outstanding differences will be resumed, as abundantly appears from the Psalms and Prophets.

The apostle in Eph. 2: 11-18 thus contrasts the new thing with their previously existing relations, the one dispensationally nigh, and the other afar off:-

"Wherefore remember, that ye being at one time Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands — that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who at one time were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances; that He might make in Himself of the two one new man, making peace; and He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And He came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

That is, in and for the church, such fleshly distinctions are done away. Beyond a doubt, in the church's glory accomplished on high, they will be unknown. But the apostle goes farther, and particularly insists that they are, and ought to be, unknown now. No man, not even Christ, known after the flesh, is the key-note of the church: "yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." The church can rest on nothing short of death and resurrection. She rejoices in her Head glorified in heaven, and knows herself even now one with Him there. Consequently she is raised alike above the high estate of the Jew, and above the low estate of the Gentile. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour" (Phil. 3: 20).

But again, if the mass of those gathered into the church were dark, outcast Gentiles; if they could not say, we are "Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever," they received a better adoption and a more surpassing glory: not merely covenants connected with earthly things and presented by a Messiah (whatever His own personal dignity), as minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; but the unsearchable riches of Christ freely given, which it was meet for the God of grace and glory to bestow upon the far-off penury and

wretchedness of those who possessed nothing!

This was "the mystery" which was specially entrusted to the apostle Paul, made known unto him by revelation, "as I wrote before in a few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was 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 by the gospel." It consists of Christ as well as of the church, she only by grace having oneness with Him Who is Head over all things.

In previous ages the Spirit had quickened souls: there was nothing strange in that. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the Son of God, not yet lifted up. The extraordinary thing was, that, when the Jews perverted their singular endowments to sin and insult the most aggravated against God, not aiding only but provoking and inciting the Gentiles to the crucifixion of their own Messiah, occasion was taken of the breach thus of necessity made between God and a guilty world, to introduce a secret hitherto undisclosed but now unveiled. The elect nation had consummated their corruption and violence. God's name was blasphemed among the heathen through those who were separated to be the grand depository of His oracles and the witness of His character on earth. What remained, if thus the earth and its choicest people were in rebellion? Heaven; and so, in the depths of divine compassion and wisdom and love, God began to create a new body neither Jewish nor Gentile properly, though chosen out of either, both made one, both reconciled in one body, destined for a sphere as alien from the most exalted as from the most debased of earth.

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us," say the Jewish saints in Ps. 67, "that thy way may be made known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations . . . . God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." Such is the order of blessing in the world to come: the Jews in the inner circle, and in the outer the Gentiles through them glad and singing for joy, for God will govern in righteousness. The blessing of the nations was an ancient and reiterated truth; proclaimed to Abraham (Gen. 12: 3), renewed in the Seed (Gen. 22: 18), repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26: 4), and to Jacob (Gen. 28: 14). It was bound up in terms with the promises so well known and cherished, which guaranteed the highest seat on earth to the seed of Abraham.

Is, then, a most certain and familiar pledge of Gentile blessing in the promised Seed, so often and not obscurely referred to in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, — is this the mystery which has been "hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints"? Can that with propriety be said specially and absolutely to be hid, which was among the simplest and most frequently recurring household words of the people of God, from the time of the first promise to the patriarchs? There is no secret nor silence about that which was published from age to age, and declared from generation to generation. What was made known to the fathers, and indeed to all Israel, cannot be, for this very reason, the mystery of Christ — that peculiar mystery, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it was now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Some, I am aware, through unbelief and a consequent lack of spiritual intelligence and heed to human tradition, have unwittingly sought to neutralise the speciality, and thereby the nature and being, of "the mystery," by the assumption that it had been revealed from the beginning, and that it was always, though dimly, understood by the Old Testament saints. The answer is plain and direct: the apostle Paul says positively that "it was now revealed." From the beginning of the world it was hid in God (Eph. 3: 9). To the apostles and prophets it was now revealed, and to none previously — ὡς νῦν

ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι. Certainly it is not to the apostles at the present and to the prophets at a former time. It was "now" revealed, and that to persons joined together as a common class to which the revelation was then made; as the structure of the words necessarily implies to any competent to judge of such a question, shutting out therefore the idea of any prophets being referred to before the Pentecostal mission of the Spirit. The prophets, alluded to in the text, were of the present economy as much as the apostles were; and therefore the words, far from weakening, tend directly to strengthen the distinctive character of "the mystery," as a thing wholly unrevealed in former times. It was a new revelation.

The character, also, of the Abrahamic blessing of the Gentiles is totally different from that of "the mystery." "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," etc. (Gen. 22). All the nations are to be blessed in the Seed; but they are, and are here regarded as being, distinct from it. They are no more to be confounded with Israel, so as to form one common body, than are the enemies whose gate is to be the possession of Israel. It and the nations are assuredly to inherit a blessing. But if it be the same blessing, will any one maintain that it is after the same mode or in the same measure? If it be so—if the seed and all the nations of the earth are blessed indiscriminately and alike, where is the marked and characteristic prerogative of the seed of Abraham? Or is there, in truth, no peculiar privilege for his seed after all? If, on the other hand, it be not so, and the seed is to have its own proper promised place by divine favour, higher than all the nations who are blessed in Christ, then is the oath to Abraham most clearly distinguished from "the mystery" wherein no such differences exist, but the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.

Let it be repeated, that Ephesians 2 and 3 do not teach the permanent and unlimited setting aside of Jewish exaltation above the Gentile. To such a superiority in this world the Jews had a lawful title, until Christ, in rejection, ascended into heaven; and such a superiority will be theirs when He returns again. But there is the abolition of everything of the sort for that which spans the interim, in other words, for the intermediate calling of the church. Because the church is not a mere aggregate of units or of believing persons throughout all ages, but a special body gathered by virtue of the Holy Ghost, now present and dwelling in them as a temple too, for association with the heavenly glory of Christ; as the redeemed Jews in the millennium will be the nearest and most favoured objects of His earthly rule, when He appears in glory.

It is, then, the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, descended from heaven, which acts as the power of the unity established here below in the church: a unity not merely of life — of doctrine — of service, but of the Spirit; the unity formed and perpetuated by the Holy Ghost Himself (Eph. 4: 3). The disciples, like saints before them, were believers before Pentecost; but they were then, and not before, united to Christ in heavenly places as His body. That which unites to Christ, constituting us members of His body, as scripture so often declares, is not the faith which the Spirit communicates as He has ever done, but the Spirit Himself subsequently and personally given, as was the case at Pentecost.

Observe, it is not "unity of spirit." This is the theme pressed upon the Philippians (Phil. 1: 27): "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;" and compare Phil. 3: 16. Nor has the apostle forgotten elsewhere to pray for the saints at Rome, that the God of patience and consolation would grant them to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that they might with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace as this surely is, the exhortation in Ephesians 4 is of a higher order. It is not so much the spirit of themselves, or of one another that they were to think of; it is the Spirit given, the unity of the Spirit. Moreover, the apostle does not tell them to form a society by community of object, agreement of opinion, or likeness of manners. Certainly it was not an optional alliance which they were called upon to frame. The Spirit present makes the unity. Their business is, "using diligence to keep (or, observe, τηρεῖν) it in the bond of peace." How humbling to man and exalting to God: how encouraging, wholesome, and strengthening for His saints!

To one who has entered, howsoever little, into the divine estimate of what the church is and will be in the counsels of God, or even of what the church originally was when, gazing into the heavenly face of Him Who loved her, she reflected by the Spirit somewhat of the light of God's glory which she had seen there — to the heart of such a one, grieving over the wreck of the deposit that was committed to the frail and treacherous hands of man, and humbled at his puny and ineffectual and proud efforts to repair the ruin which he can no longer disguise — to such, I say, oh! what a relief to know and feel that even here in the desert it is not "my flock," nor "our church," but the church of God, the body of Christ, the unity of the Spirit!

These are the living realities with which we have to do; and at all cost to repudiate in ourselves, or in others, corporately and individually, all that denies them. That single-eyed unflinching allegiance to the wideness of God's heart about His people must, in a time of general departure from Him, lead into an isolated path, I do not doubt, however paradoxical it may seem. That it may appear to be a severe exclusive narrowness, to those who are not weaned from the worldliness and unbelief of essays on a grand scale, is possible; but for the faithful there is no choice. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

None of course would deny that, as men, as sinners, as Jews or Gentiles, there are certain things possessed in common with others. There is a unity of mankind, as such or fallen, as under law and without law. There is a continuity in the administration of the promises dispensationally on earth, according to which Rom. 11 views, first, the Jews as the natural branches of the olive-tree; then, some of them broken off because of unbelief, and the Gentiles, or wild olive-tree, grafted among them; and afterwards, upon the Gentiles not continuing in the goodness of God, the Jews grafted again into their own olive-tree.\* Again, there is a unity which dates higher up than the olive-tree of earthly witness—that of all the faithful, who, in the acknowledgement of common sin, look to a common Saviour, as there will be a blessed and holy communion of such as have part in the first resurrection.

\* In Romans 11 there is a cutting off as to the branches: in Ephesians there is nothing of the sort; it would be a dismembering of Christ, which is impossible. In Romans 11 the Jews were the natural branches, and the blessings were the blessings of their own olive-tree, into which, contrary to nature, the Gentiles are temporarily grafted. But in Ephesians those who were near and those who were afar off in the world were alike treated as lost sinners. The only character which either possessed by nature is that of "children of wrath" (such the favoured Jews were), "even as others."

But all these varied groups are demonstrably distinct from "the unity of the Spirit." With the redeemed, it is true, the Spirit had to do, inasmuch as He it is Who had given souls to believe God's salvation in Christ. This therefore was not, whereas the unity of the Spirit is, a new thing; for never before had He come to abide in sinners redeemed, and thus to make them one with Christ glorified on high and one with each other here below. Satan had his union of Jews and Gentiles in the cross of the Son of God; and in that cross the foundation was laid for God's union, effected by the presence and indwelling of the Spirit in those who enjoy the exceeding riches of the grace of God in His kindness

toward them through Christ Jesus. "There is one body and one Spirit."

Another remark, connecting itself with the foregoing, needs to be made. Those who form the church, whatever may be their distinctive endowments, share many blessings with all saints who ever have been and ever may be. Election, redemption, faith, saintship, and heirship in the kingdom are doubtless our privileges; but they are not the exclusive property of the church. They are common to all believers. So true is this, that they may be traced in the spared and blessed Gentiles of the striking scene described in Matt. 25: 31-46.

Thus the Son of man is supposed to be already come and seated upon the throne of His glory, and He separates, among all the Gentiles (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) gathered before Him, the sheep from the goats. The gospel of the kingdom had been preached, it may be observed, for a witness to all those Gentiles (πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσι) before the end came; and the ground of the sentence is laid in the reception or rejection of those whom Jesus, as the King (for His royal rights are now enforced, displayed, and acknowledged), designates as His brethren, a class evidently distinct from, though coming in contact with, the sheep and the goats. To the sheep, set at His right hand, the King says "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." That these are believing souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ, none perhaps would dispute; and the passage affirms that the kingdom which they inherit was prepared for them from the foundation of the world: terms which differ indeed from those in Eph. 1 (which show how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him before the foundation of the world), but sufficiently decisive of the fact that God prepared a special inheritance for these living Gentiles, whatever might be the small amount of their spiritual intelligence.

But if there are blessings common to all believers of every age, the Holy Ghost, on the other hand, could not personally come down, and abide in men on earth, according to the scriptural figure springing up in them as well as flowing out, until Jesus was glorified in heaven. But when He took His seat there as the exalted head, the Holy Ghost was sent down for the purpose of gathering a body for Christ. This and this only is called in the scriptures "the church of God;" and its unity, hinging upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is, as we have seen, "the unity of the Spirit." Matt. 16: 18 is the first occurrence of the word "church," *i.e.* assembly, in the New Testament. It is important to observe that there it is spoken of as a thing not merely unmanifested, and unordered, but not yet existing. It was not built, nor building yet: "upon this rock I *will* build my church." Secondly, the promise that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it hardly alludes to the indefectibility, much less to the infallibility, of the church on earth. Thirdly, Christ's church is mentioned as altogether distinct from the kingdom of heaven, the keys of which (not of His church) the Lord promises to give to Peter.

The unity of the church as Christ's body will surely be displayed perfectly for the administration of the fulness of seasons, when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. But does not this scripture teach, that the church, if for the time on earth to itself as the heavenly witness of the grace of God, will then form part of a common system? I answer, that the passage seems, on the contrary, to keep distinct the church in her own peculiar and pre-eminent seat of the affection and glory of Christ. For, first, the apostle speaks of the heavenly things and the earthly things being headed up in Christ, which is deduced (in Colossians 1: 15, 16) from His claims as Creator, though asserted by Him as the Firstborn of every creature; in which latter text we have His supremacy affirmed by right of creation over all things that are in heaven and that are on earth. Next, it is added, "In whom [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory who have pre-trusted in Christ: in whom ye also," etc. (Eph. 1: 11-

13).

Just so we may observe, after the statement of His headship over all things, the Epistle to the Colossians turns to another headship. "And He is the head of the body, the church: the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Neither heavenly things nor earthly things are the church, though they are to be the inheritance she shares who is co-heir with Christ. God "hath put all things under His feet, and given Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body." Instead of being included in "all things under His feet," she enjoys and participates in His supremacy over all by virtue of being one with Him. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, she looks for an inheritance such as becomes Him Who purchased it, and Him also Who is its earnest; such as becomes (may we not add?) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "to whom be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." See also Rev. 21: 2, 3.

But although it is for "the administration of the fulness of seasons" that the glory of Christ, shared by the church as His bride, will be revealed, so that the world itself shall know it, yet was there a testimony to it, produced and manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost in the one body on earth. When the apostle spoke of the saints being "builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit," was this unity a thing ideal, future, and only to be achieved in heaven? Or was it not an actual present fact made good here below by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? Is it not true that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God?" And the unity of the Spirit, which the saints should be diligent to keep, where was it if not on earth? Will the saints in heaven use their diligence to keep it there? Again, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers given of Christ (Himself ascended up far above all heavens), where were they, and where still are the gifts of Christ? Where and to what end is exercised the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ? Does the perfecting (καταρτισμὸς) of the saints, does the work of the ministry, does the edifying of the body of Christ, find their sphere in heaven? Is it there that we are in danger of being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of men's doctrine? Is it not on earth that we meet with "sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive?" Is it not here that we "grow up unto him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4: 15, 16)? It was here, in the church, that each joint of supply wrought, contributing nourishment to the whole: it was here, according to the effectual working in the measure of each one part, that the body made increase. It is in this world, and in this world only, that "all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God;" as it is assuredly here that the Spirit would have the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, to the which also we were called in one body (Col. 2, 3).

In writing to the saints at Rome (Rom. 12), hitherto never seen by the apostle, and therefore in man's judgment at least connected in no peculiar way with him, as was the case too with regard to the Colossians, it is just the same: "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same function; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Evidently it is not a tie which was going to be established, but a relationship then and really existent. Membership is not with a local church but with the body of Christ; though, on the other hand, if one be not in fellowship with the assembly of Christ's members where one resides, there can be for such no fellowship with them anywhere else at the same time.

Nor can language be more explicit than that of 1 Cor. 12. "But all these worketh the one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one and hath many

members, and all the members of the body being many are one body; so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink of one Spirit" (ver. 13). The composition of that one body depends upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By Him are we baptised into the body of Christ, Jews, Gentiles, bond or free; it matters not. The great fact is, that Jesus exercised His heavenly rights. He baptised with the Holy Ghost; and they who were thus baptised became the immediate and the especial field of His presence and operations, the body of Christ, the body subsisting on earth, and acted on by the Spirit when the apostle wrote.

The diversities of gifts, of administrations, and of operations, will not be in heaven. Their province is the church on earth. It is here that the manifestation is given to every man (*i.e.*, in the church) to profit withal. If any reasonable doubt could be harboured about the word of wisdom to one, the word of knowledge to another, and faith to a third, there can be no question in the believer's mind, that the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, divers kinds of tongues, and their interpretation, are not prospectively for heaven but for earth now. It is the one and selfsame Spirit Who energised all these, distributing to each. For the many members constitute but one body; "by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body."

The importance of these last words will be better estimated on comparing with them Acts 1: 4, 5; and particularly the clause, "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." At the time the disciples were believers. They had life, and life more abundantly, we may say Jesus, the quickening Spirit, had breathed upon them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," etc. He had also opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. But none of these things is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost first beheld the accomplishment of the promise of the Father. Then, and not before, were believers baptised with the Spirit. But it is this baptism which introduces into, and forms, the one body; it is the Spirit, thus present and baptising, Who began and organises, as He recruits the body of Christ. Hence is it, that coincident with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we first hear in the word of God of this new body, and of membership therein. Whatever the privileges (and there were many) which existed before, that which is distinctively called in the Bible the church of God appeared here below, as the consequence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, dwelling in the disciples, and baptising them, Jews or Gentiles, into one body, of which the ascended Christ is the Head. The church, His body, derived its being from His presence in heaven as the glorified Man, and from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit on earth.

"But, as it is, God set the members every one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they all were one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. [And] the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 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 while our comely parts have no need. But God tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to the [part] which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body; but that the members might 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 Christ's body and members in particular." 1 Cor. 12: 18- 27.

When Christ's members are together in heaven, our mortal body changed, fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself, will any "seem to be more feeble?" Shall we think any to be "less honourable" there, and, "upon these

bestow more abundant honour?" That this is a present care, flowing out of the sense God gives us of the exigencies and of the preciousness of Christ's body here below, is exactly what I am contending for. Does any one believe that such will be our employment when Christ presents the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But if not, these members were members of the body then on earth, for God had tempered the body together, "having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body (in heaven there is no danger of schism); but that the members might 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," this is clearly not in heaven, but on earth. "Now ye are Christ's body and members in particular:" where and when is this? Surely then on earth. Heaven is not in question. It was a subsisting fact here, though in the spiritual sphere, and fraught with blessing and responsibility of the utmost importance to Christ's glory for every one of His members.

"And God did set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Manifestly, these are gifts in the church—the whole church on earth. The apostle addresses, no doubt, the church of God that was at Corinth; while it is very clear that the New Testament frequently speaks of assemblies in this or that locality, that is, churches (compare Rom. 15: 1, 5; Gal. 1: 2, 22; Col. 4: 15, 16; 1 Thess. 1: 1; 2: 14, etc). But, besides this which is not disputed, as well as the application of the term in Heb. 12: 23 to the congregation of the firstborn which are written in heaven viewed as a completed thing, however anticipative faith might say, "Ye have come" to it, even as to the other components of the glory — besides in short the local and the future senses, 1 Cor. 12: 28 is clearly another sense of the most important bearing, as seen elsewhere in the Epistles of Paul: the church, as a body here below, in a breadth as extensive as the baptism of the Spirit. That entire society or corporation, wherein He dwelt and wrought, was the church in which God set apostles, prophets, teachers, etc. Certainly it is impossible to say that He had set all these in the Corinthian assembly; nor will it be maintained that He is to set them in the church universal gathered on high.

There is, then, another and large sense of "the church," in which unity is predicated of all the members of Christ existing at one time in the world, whatever might be the distance separating their bodies; and that in virtue of one Spirit baptising them into one body. The body of Christ, like the natural one, is susceptible of increase, as scripture plainly indicates. But as in the natural body the identity subsists when the old particles have given place to new, so the body of Christ is the body still, whatever the changes in the members particularly. He Who by His presence imparted unity at its beginning, conserves unity by His own faithful presence. He was given to abide with the disciples for ever.

In fine, by "the church" is meant not a junction of various co-ordinate (much less conflicting) societies but a body, the one body of Christ, possessing the same privileges and call and responsibility on earth, and looking for the same glory in heaven as the Bride of Christ. If a man were baptised by the Spirit, he was thereby constituted a member of the church; if he had a gift, it was to be exercised according to the proportion of faith for the good of the whole: not ministry, not membership, pertaining to a church but to the church; each joint belonging to the entire body, and the entire body to each joint (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 3, 12, 14; Eph. 1, 4; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 3: 15; Rev. 22: 17). If it be God's truth, it is for the believer to act on, to walk, serve, and worship in. Divine truth without corresponding faithfulness is the shame and condemnation of him who merely owns it. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

W.K.