

Thus saith the Lord

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(Pray refer to the Scriptures quoted)

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A COLLECTION OF GOD'S WORDS ON GOD'S WAY OF ASSEMBLING GOD'S CHILDREN;

For the Word of God, which discerns the thoughts and intents of the *heart* (Heb. 4: 12), is able to furnish the man of God *thoroughly unto all good works* (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17); and, being so, it would never leave the manner for the children of God to assemble themselves together undetermined, to become a bone of contention amidst diversities of opinion. People may assert that, without man's additions, it is not capable of building up a Church, but *Paul* asserts that it is (Acts 20: 32). Moreover GOD'S WORD must be referred to (Isa. 8: 20; Matt. 4: 4; John 17: 17; 1 Peter 2: 2), searched (John 5: 39; Acts 17: 11), understood (Matt. 13: 23; Luke 24: 45; Acts 8: 30; Col. 3: 16), and *obeyed* (Ezra 9: 4; Isa. 66: 2, 5; 1 Thess. 2: 13; James 1: 21-25), and it *alone* on *all* points; — else we go wrong (Matt. 15: 9; Matt. 22: 29; Mark 7: 7-9, 13; Titus 1: 14; Rev. 22: 18, 19).

1.

When Jesus was on earth among the disciples the Father had given (John 6: 37), and brought (John 6: 44, 65), by the operation of His Spirit (John 3: 5-8) and word (John 4: 41; John 8: 47; James 1: 18), to Him (John 3: 14-17; 1 John 5: 1), to receive eternal life, from Him (John 5: 24; John 17: 2; 1 John 5: 11, 12), they gathered round His person (Matt. 10: 38; Matt. 19: 27; Mark 6: 30, 31), and were subject to His commands (Luke 10: 1; John 10: 4; John 15: 14) and teaching (Matt. 5: 1, 2; Luke 11: 1); and, when He departed, He promised them His presence still (Matt. 28: 20; John 14: 18), and especially so to any two or more believers gathered in His name (Matt. 18: 20).

2.

After He had by Himself purged our sins (Heb. 1: 3; 1 Peter 2: 24), Jesus Christ ascended up on high, far above all principality and power (Eph. 1: 20, 21; 1 Peter 3: 22), and sat down on the right hand of God (Rom. 8: 34; Heb. 10: 12, 13; Heb. 12: 2). This He did as the *Risen Head of His Body*, the Church (Col. 1: 18); which is said to be dead with Him to sin (Rom. 6: 2-11), the law (Rom. 7: 1-6; Gal. 2: 16-21), and the world (Col. 2: 20), risen with Him from the dead (Col. 3: 1-3), and seated in Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2: 5, 6); where He is our life (Col. 3: 4) and peace (Eph. 2: 14), we being there accepted (Eph. 1: 6), complete (Col. 2: 10), and blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1: 3) in Him, and joint heirs with Him of God (Rom. 8: 16, 17), He being the RESURRECTION-HEAD over ALL THINGS to HIS BODY the Church (Eph. 1: 21-23).

3.

But, before He was parted from His disciples and carried up into heaven (Luke 24: 51), He promised not to leave them comfortless or destitute down here (John 14: 18), but to pray the Father (John, 14: 16), who, after His departure (John 16: 7) and His entrance into His glory (Luke 24: 26; John 7: 37-39; Acts 2: 33), would give them in His *stead* ANOTHER COMFORTER to *abide* with them FOR EVER,

even the HOLY GHOST (John 14: 16, 25, 26), — the Holy Spirit of promise (Luke 24: 49; Acts 2: 33; Eph. 1: 13), — who should be sent them in the *name of Christ* (John 14: 26), to glorify Him amongst His disciples on earth (John 16: 13, 14; 1 Cor. 12: 3), and to enable them there abidingly to enjoy the manifested presence of the Father and His Son (John 14: 16-26; John 15: 26; John 16: 14-16; Eph. 2: 18; Eph. 3: 16, 17; 1 John 1: 3; 1 John 2: 24, 27; 1 John 4: 13).

4.

The world cannot receive this blessed Comforter (John 14: 17), but only those who, by Him, have been led to believe in the Lord Jesus (John 7: 37-39; 2 Cor. 1: 22; Gal. 3: 2-5, 14; Gal. 4: 6; Eph. 1: 13).

5.

Such was our gracious Lord's promise of this *great blessing* to His flock; and we find them commanded to pray for it (Luke 11: 13), and wait for its most glorious fulfilment after His ascension (Luke 24: 49); which they did (Acts 1: 14): and we find it bestowed first on believing Jews (Acts 2: 1-4, 33, 37, 38), and subsequently on believing Gentiles (Acts 10: 44-46).

6.

The Holy Ghost, having thus descended on all believers, baptizes (Mark 1: 8; John 1: 33; Acts 1: 5) them all, Jew and Gentile irrespectively (Acts 11: 15-18; Acts 15: 7-9; Rom. 10: 12; Gal. 3: 28; Eph. 2: 18; Col. 3: 11), — the Jewish economy, etc., being now taken out of the way (Eph. 2: 11-17; Heb. 8, Heb. 9, Heb. 10, Heb. 13: 9-14, etc.), — into *one* body (1 Cor. 12: 13; Eph. 3: 6; Col. 1: 18, 24; Col. 3: 15), even the body of Christ (Rom. 12: 5; 1 Cor. 12: 27), being of His flesh and His bones (Eph. 5: 29-32); which body is the temple of God (2 Cor. 6: 16; Eph. 2: 20-22); *all* believers being one spirit with the lord (1 Cor. 6: 17), so having Christ in them the hope of glory (Col. 1: 27), and also being partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1: 4). THIS BODY OF CHRIST and TEMPLE OF GOD, composed irrespectively of Jews and Gentiles, and INHABITED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD HIMSELF, was the great mystery hidden from ages and generations (Col. 1: 24-28), but now made known to Christ's holy apostles and prophets, and through them to the saints by the Spirit (Rom. 16: 25, 26; Eph. 3: 1-11; Eph. 5: 29-32).

7.

Farther, we find that this Holy Ghost, the glorious gift of a bountiful, triumphant, risen Christ to His Bride, the Church (Eph. 4: 7-10), not only assures believers of their sonship to God (Rom. 8: 15-17; Gal. 6: 6), gives them abiding confidence (2 Cor. 5: 5, 6), is the earnest of their inheritance (Eph. 1: 13, 14), produces in them the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal. 5: 22, 23), and can impart to them the mind of Christ, even in the deep things of God (John 16: 13-15; 1 Cor. 2: 9-16), so that they are said to know all things by Him (1 John 2: 20-27), etc.; but, having made *all believers everywhere members* of *one* body in Christ (Rom. 12: 5), He imparts to *each* member some gift (Rom. 12: 3-8; Eph. 4: 7; 1 Peter 4: 10), dividing severally to *every* man as HE WILL (1 Cor. 12: 11, 18, 28; Heb. 2: 4), to be used for the edification (building up) of the body, till we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, etc., (Eph. 4: 11-16), These gifts, which are to be earnestly coveted (1 Cor. 12: 31), — and the right using and cultivating of them, are much dwelt upon in the Word of God (Rom. 12: 5-8 1 Cor. 12, 1 Cor. 14; 1 Tim. 4: 13-16; 2 Tim. 1: 6; 1 Peter 4: 10, 11 etc.)

8.

Not only is the whole Church of Christ called into existence through faith in His name, and indwelt

and built up by the Spirit of Christ, but we find believers in various localities exhorted not to forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb. 10: 25), in the name of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 18: 20; 1 Cor. 5: 4): — His name through faith in His name, being the only door of admission prescribed; for, whilst they were commanded to receive those weak in the faith (Rom. 14: 1), they were enjoined to try the spirits (1 John 4: 1, Rev. 2: 2; see also Acts 9: 26, 27), and forbidden to have fellowship with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6: 14-18); though false brethren might creep in privily or *unawares* (Gal. 2: 4; Jude 4), they were commanded to warn the unruly (1 Thess. 5: 14), to have *no* company with such as walked disorderly or insubordinately to God's word (Rom. 16: 17, 18; 2 Thess. 3: 6, 14), and to judge, and even put away, inconsistent persons (1 Cor. 5: 9-13), — as well as to comfort the feeble-minded (1 Thess. 5: 14), restore the faulty in a spirit of meekness (Gal. 6: 1), and forgive the truly penitent (2 Cor. 2: 5-8), — because they being many were one bread or loaf (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17), and a *little* leaven leaveneth the whole lump (1 Cor. 5: 5-7; Gal. 5: 9; Heb. 12: 15, 16): and we find them commended for showing *indignation* and *revenge against* evil detected amongst themselves, as well as godly sorrow about it (2 Cor. 7: 11, 12). When thus assembling themselves together, they were to exhort one another (Heb. 10: 25), and, — praying in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 8: 26, 27; Jude 20, 21), — to build themselves up, and comfort one another (1 Thess. 5: 11); and they were *commanded* to give the FULLEST SCOPE AND LIBERTY TO "THE LORD THE SPIRIT" (see 2 Cor. 3: 17, 18, marg.) to *exercise* as He would (1 Cor. 14: 30, 31; 1 Thess. 5: 19, 20), such gifts as He had *distributed* according to His will (1 Cor. 12: 11; Heb. 2: 4). They were also enjoined to break bread and drink wine together in celebration of our blessed Lord's death, and in expectation of His return (Matt. 26: 26-28; Mark 14: 22-24; Luke 22: 19, 20; 1 Cor. 11: 23-26); which they used to do on the first day of the week (Acts 20: 7).

9.

Those who called themselves of any denomination or sect beyond that of Christians (Acts 11: 26; 1 Peter 4: 16), — stigmatised as the "sect of Nazarenes" (Acts 24: 5; Acts 28: 22), — are blamed (1 Cor. 1: 12, 13; 1 Cor. 3: 3-9): as also those would have been, who, *instead of* endeavouring to keep THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT (Eph. 4: 3), by which we are built up in *the unity of the faith* (Eph. 4: 13), separate themselves for any unity not in subjection to the Holy Ghost.*

* Qy. Might not Jude 19 apply corporately to such unions?

10.

Moreover we find that where THE PRESENCE of the LORD JESUS, through His Representative the HOLY GHOST, is PRACTICALLY and fully recognized and realized *in*, and *by*, an assembly of members of Christ, nor merely as a doctrine, but as a LIVING TRUTH, the POWER OF GOD is promised (Matt. 18: 15-19), and displayed in that assembly, to rule, judge, guide, bless, teach, build up, etc., etc., (Acts 5: 1-11, 13, 14; Acts 11: 27, 28; Acts 13: 1-4; Acts 15: 2-29, 32; Acts 20: 22, 23; Acts 21: 4, 10, 11; 1 Cor. 5: 4-13; 1 Cor. 11: 19-32; 1 Cor. 14: 24, 25, 30, 31; 2 Cor. 2: 6, 7), in a greater or less degree.

11.

But where then are the college-educated, and regularly or humanly ordained, and salaried ministers and dignitaries? The scriptures do speak, — although not as man speaks, — of instruction and elocution (Matt. 11: 25-27; Matt. 13: 11-16, 51, 52; Matt. 16: 17; Luke 24: 25-27, 44-48; Acts 4: 13, 20; Acts 18: 24-28; 1 Cor. 1: 17 - 2: 16; 2 Cor. 10: 10; Gal. 1: 10-23), and salaries (Acts 18: 3; Acts 20: 33-35; 1 Cor. 4: 11, 12; 1 Cor. 9: 7-18; 2 Cor. 11: 27; 2 Cor. 12: 13-18; Phil. 4: 10-18; 1 Thess. 2: 9; 2 Thess. 3: 7, 8; 1 Peter 5: 1-3; 3 John 6-8), and also of regularly ordained (appointed) elders (called also bishops or overseers, comp. Acts 20: 17 with 28, and Titus 1: 5 with 6, 7), and deacons (that is,

servants or ministers), in some of the churches, in the New Testament; but only the apostles (Acts 6: 2, 3, 6; Acts 14: 23), or those like Timothy or Titus, with a special gift of the Holy Ghost (2 Tim. 1: 6), and authority from an apostle (Titus 1: 5), might appoint these (1 Tim. 3: 1-15; 1 Tim. 5: 17-22; Titus 1: 5-9; and comp. Acts 6: 3 with 6).* Also we read of the Spirit and His gifts being communicated in those days through the laying on of hands (Acts 8: 15-19; Acts 9: 17; Acts 19: 6; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6), which, as practised in the present day, being unaccompanied by real power, is as mere a form as anointing a sick person with oil (James 5: 14) would now be. But we never find that the different churches might appoint the one, or conferred the other, for themselves; for *sheep* cannot *choose* or *create* their own *rulers* and *shepherds*: *still* less could money (Acts 8: 14-24), or even those ordered of God to govern *this world* (Matt. 17: 24-27; Rom 13: 1-7; Titus 3: 1, 2; 1 Peter 2: 13-18), do so for them (Matt. 22: 21). Only *the Lord of the harvest* (Matt. 9: 37, 38; Heb. 2: 4) and *the Chief Shepherd Himself* (Eph. 4: 7, 8), or one *deriving delegated, vested, and real authority and power from HIM* (and *not* from the flock or the world), could do so. If, then, any one can clearly prove that he has this authority to ordain, and this power to impart spiritual gifts (by *apostolic succession* and a *special gift of the Holy Ghost*), then the power to ordain, and to impart the Holy Ghost still really exists amongst us; but, if *no one* can satisfactorily produce and prove such authority and commission, then this power must have been *lost* amidst the mournful *wreck and apostasy* of the professing Church; and those who *pretend* to it are *infringing* on what now is *alone the direct right* of the Holy Ghost. Paul said something about "apostolic succession" to the Ephesians (Acts 20: 28-32), and then John has a word of approval to them for having acted on it (Rev. 2: 2).

* Qy. If the Churches could ordain elders, etc., for themselves, why need Paul have left Titus (Titus 1: 5) to do it?

12.

But even in the apostles' times, although they appointed overseers, etc., and communicated spiritual gifts, in some of the churches, this did not at all prevent the Holy Ghost, *even then*, distributing gifts, such as pastors, teachers, etc., like Apollos (comp. Acts 18: 24-28 with 1 Cor. 3: 6), and the house of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16: 15), etc., in the churches *without any intervention*; and if the disciples were enjoined to submit themselves to such then (1 Cor. 16: 16; 1 Thess. 5: 12; Heb. 13: 17), — though not blindly (Matt. 15: 14), as to those having dominion over their faith (2 Cor. 1: 24), but in the fear of GOD (Eph. 5: 21), and the light of His word (Isa. 8: 20; Acts 17: 11), — how much more now. I repeat, all such apostolic power having clearly ceased, we can, in the present Church ruin and day of *weakness*, *only* fall back on the blessed Comforter, who is to abide with us FOR EVER (John 14: 16; 1 John 2: 27), and whose presence in the Church, therefore, will never cease, and thankfully acknowledge and receive *such gifts* as *He* may be pleased still to raise up amongst us, "dividing severally to *every man* as HE will" (1 Cor. 12: 11), and, — knowing that God has expressly spoken of the many vain talkers, false teachers (2 Cor 11: 14, 15), mere formalists and ungodly men, who resist the truth, covetous practices, perverse ways, doctrines and disputings, vain babblings, old wives' fables, etc., etc., which would come in these perilous times, the last days (Acts 20: 29, 30; 2 Thess. 2: 7; 1 Tim. 4: 1-3; 2 Tim. 3: 1-9, 13; 2 Tim. 4: 3, 4; Titus 1: 10-16; 2 Peter 2, 2 Peter 3: 3-7; 1 John 2: 18, 19; 1 John 4: 1; Jude 1-23), — obey Him by withdrawing and purging ourselves from all these (Matt. 7: 15-20; Matt. 18: 17; John 10: 5; Eph. 5: 11; 1 Tim. 1 Tim. 4: 7, 12-16; 1 Tim. 6: 3-11; 2 Tim. 2: 14-23; 2 Tim. 3: 5 Titus 2: 7, 8; Titus 3: 9-11; Heb. 13: 13; 2 John 8-11 Rev. 2: 14, 15, 20; Rev. 18: 4), and by following after righteousness, faith, charity and peace with them that call *on the Lord out of a pure heart* (2 Tim. 2: 22; Jude 20, 21).

Finally, GOD says, HEARKEN, — and, — OBEY (1 Sam. 15: 22). Let God be true, but every man

a liar (Rom. 3: 4). Prove ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good (1 Thess. 5: 21); for to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it *not*, to him it is SIN (James 4: 17); and let every one that nameth the name of Christ *depart from iniquity* (2 Tim. 2: 19). ABHOR that which is evil, cleave to that which is good (Rom. 12: 9). If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye DO them (John 13: 17). *Grieve not the Holy Spirit* (Eph. 4: 30). *Quench not the Spirit* (1 Thess. 5: 19).

"Thus saith the LORD;" and if I go and worship in another way, I show either my *ignorance*, or my self-will and *disobedience*, and thereby I create, or by my presence countenance, some *sect*, *denomination*, or *party outside GOD'S principles*, which are "THE UNITY OF THE FAITH" and the "UNITY OF THE SPIRIT." I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say (1 Cor. 10: 15); for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4: 20).